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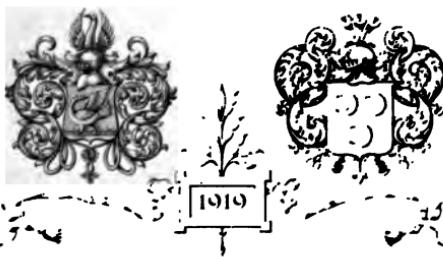
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*granddaughter of
General Peter Gansevoort, junior
and widow of the
Honorable Abraham Lansing
of Albany, New York*

Levy







T H E
CANTERBURY TALES
O F
CHAUCER;

COMPLETED IN A MODERN VERSION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

• V O L. II.

Old Chaucer like the morning star
To us discovers day from far ;
His light those mists and clouds dissolv'd,
Which our dark nation long involv'd.

DEANAM.

O X F O R D :
Printed for J. COOKE ;
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CANTERBURY TALES.

PROLOGUE

TO THE

COOK'S TALE.

CLOSE by the Reve, the Cook of London rides,
And claps him on the back, and burfts his sides.
“ Paffion of Christ ! (he cry’d, with laughter fraught)
“ Sir Reve, you ended with a hum’rous thought,
“ Was e’er so justly handled in the dark,
“ Felonious Miller by lascivious Clerk ?
“ Well was it said, by hermit in his cave,
“ Notorious knave will catch notorious knave.
“ And slippery hands they have, the truth to tell,
“ Who grind the meal, or study in the cell.

VOL. II.

B

“ But

“ But for the argument of board and bed,
“ Much, would the time permit, might here be said.
“ Make this, says Solomon, your standing rule,
“ (And Solomon, you know, was far from fool)
“ ’Tis perilous trust to harbour man by night;
“ He may be foe or friend, unknown of sight:
“ But folly to receive him as a friend,
“ Who, if a foe, thy ruin may intend.
“ Yet, sure as I was christen’d Hodge of Ware,
“ Or be my life one scene of toil and care,
“ Never was yet a match more equal found,
“ Than these that came to grind, and those that ground.
“ But heav’n forbid, that here the sport should stand;
“ No, rather be it thrown from hand to hand:
“ And though not over-us’d to write, or read,
“ My tale perhaps may pass, if not succeed;
“ As bad, in want of better, may go down:
“ For though no scholar, yet I know the town.”

‘ Roger, reply’d our Host, thy tale recite;
‘ I sign the grant. But see, thy tale be right;
‘ The turn divertive, or the moral good.
‘ Of many a pasty hast thou drawn the blood;
‘ And many a Jack of Dover hast thou sold,
‘ For fresh, the’ twice ’twas hot, and twice ’twas cold;
‘ Disguis’d

‘ Disguis'd in sauce, that none knew what to call,
‘ Confounding sour and sweet, the devil and all:
‘ Of which when hungry pilgrim fares the worse,
‘ He growls, and sends thee many a holy curse;
‘ Blasphemes thy stubble goose, with parsley stor'd,
‘ And ev'ry fly that taints thy larder board.
‘ But, Hodge of Ware, I call thee by thy name,
‘ In serious take not what is said in game.
‘ We border near in trade; excuse the jest:
‘ I only mean to rouse you to your best.’

“ Right, by my faith, quoth Roger, what you say;
“ In play admit what you advance in play.
“ This is the only rule for converse fit;
“ Yet who so touchy as a flashy wit?
“ Backward to bear, as forward to provoke:
“ Who gives a joke, 'tis true, should take a joke.
“ And therefore, Harry Ballie, blithe of heart,
“ I mean to state accounts before we part:
“ Nor you with choler boil, nor anger burn,
“ If to an inn the scene of laughter turn;
“ There should I treat you with a goodly Hoft,
“ Put down, in payment due, a Cook to roast.
“ All functions have their good and bad, believe,
“ Whate'er may judge the Miller or the Reve;

“ And though, or yours, or mine produc'd a rook,
“ What is't to you, mine Host ; or me, your Cook ?
“ Unless the like of us our neighbours say,
“ For that's the test of man, or priest, or lay.
“ But lest it should be thought I mean to rail,
“ Or fret, like Oswalde ; I'll begin the Tale.”

THE COOK'S TALE.

YOUNG Perkin then I for my hero take,
 Whose Christian name was lost in that of Rake.
 And, though our office scarce requires a beau,
 This lad was all for vanity and show :
 Cheerful he was, as goldfinch in a grove ;
 Of jollity as full ; as full of love :
 His size was proper ; his complexion brown ;
 And round and red his lips, and soft as down :
 Black was his hair, thick furnishing his head ;
 And, neatly drest, the length his shoulders spread.
 Well could he tune his voice, and turn his feet ;
 As hive of honey, he of sport replete.
 At ev'ry marriage, first to lead the hop ;
 And more he lov'd the tavern than the shop.
 March'd but the city-bands along the Cheap,
 From off the counter lightly would he leap,
 Drawn by the martial sound, and warlike sight ;
 And ne'er return'd till morn, at least till night :
 Then would he gather from the idle throng,
 Some for the dance, and others for the song ;
 Provide for cards, or bowls, to drink, or eat,
 Here, there, at such a sign, in such a street.

But, for a throw at dice, from Tow'r to Strand,
There was not 'prentice with a readier hand.
Hence oft he pilfer'd, to support his play,
And, all he pilfer'd, squander'd day by day.
This felt his master to his los and care,
Who found full many a time his box full bare ;
For lads that love a glas, or throw a main,
That keep a mistres, or a horse maintain,
Make from the leaky drill the cash to flow ;
So sinks the stock, and runs the credit low.
Like feats, too oft, are ev'n by masters play'd,
And then they growl severe on failing trade.
But 'tis the devil in hell, (to speak sincere)
To pay for music, which you never hear.

This youth for six long years his master bore,
And chided oft for lavishing his store ;
Late when he left, or early sought, his bed ;
Yet still the same vile course young Perkin led.
Seiz'd has he been by unrelenting bum ;
The master has redeem'd him for the sum :
Seiz'd by the watch, to Newgate has been sent ;
To bail him for the broil, the master went.
Less tractable he grew for usage civil ;
Such usage as might half reform the devil.

With

With this obdurance was his patience tir'd ;
Who thus dismiss'd him, ere the term expir'd.
Industrious what I save, you wasteful spend ;
I took you as the orphan of my friend.
To me he shew'd the same paternal care :
Single I am, and meant you for my heir.
But mighty young are you, yet mighty wise ;
Nor must you be advis'd, yet will advise :
But better from the heap the tainted throw,
Than keep, till all decay'd the remnant grow. |||
So may I live in plenty, and in peace,
As here be thy indenture and release :
Pars, with a curse, lest you corrupt the rest,
And not one single servant stand the test.
All that I gave thee, with thee take away ;
And yet—reform to good, and you may stay.
To good not turn'd, he follows his delight,
And revels at his will from morn to night ;
His little substance to a comrade sends ;
For vice, like virtue, is the tye of friends :
One that had us'd the same ill course of life,
With this addition blest, an handsome wife ;
Who kept a shop, for fear what folks might say,
But kept herself a much genteeler way.

I leave it to mine Host, what quarrel wrought
Their high dislike, and how, and where they fought;
Whence one to prison was condemn'd for strife,
And one for murder forfeited his life.

Let him convey this document to youth,
Your sole delight, be virtue and be truth!
For want of this, has many a squire, well-bred,
Been forc'd to list for pay, or beg for bread:
Endu'd with this, for all his fordid race,
Has many a wretch, low-born, rose first in place.

Suffice it to have giv'n mine Host his cue,
And where the game is left, let him pursue.

PROLOGUE

TO THE

MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

OUR Host, who view'd the progress of the sun,
 Judg'd to a point how far he had to run ;
 Found they had us'd, to light them on their way,
 A fourth and more of his diurnal ray :
 Whence, though not deep expert in learned lore,
 No sage astronomer could gather more.
 Of April this he knew the eighteenth day,
 April, the show'ry messenger of May ;
 And well he mark'd, that ev'ry tree display'd,
 Proportion'd to its rise, a fall of shade ;
 Whose length was just in quantity the same,
 As was erect the body, whence it came.
 Hence could he count (nor vainly I admit,
 Though from a shadow he assum'd his wit)
 That now the sun, who shone so clear and bright,
 Had reach'd his forty-fifth degree of height ;
 And that the hour was ten, could plain descry,
 No Astrolabe consulting, but his eye.

So

So suddenly about he turns his steed ;
“ Proceed, he cries, for sake of heav’n, proceed :
“ I warn you all, by Christ and by Saint John,
“ A fourth already of the day is gone.
“ It pains me to observe the time you waste ;
“ The time, that flies away with winged haste ;
“ Can aught retard her, or in durance keep ?
“ She passes, though we wake, or though we sleep ;
“ Swift as the stream, that ne’er returns again,
“ Descending from the mountain to the plain.
“ ’Tis wise, what one, call’d Seneca, has told ;
“ That loss of time is worse than loss of gold.
“ Your steed, though stole, again you may re-see ;
“ The day, that *was*, clos’d never more to *be* ;
“ No more to be than Malkin’s virgin flow’r,
“ Should Malkin lose it in a careless hour.
“ Then let us use dispatch. Sir Man of Law,
“ Give us a tale, a tale without a flaw.
“ Acquit you of your word, to join our sport,
“ And think my sentence a decree of court.
“ You promis’d by my judgment to abide.”
‘ Brother, agreed, the Serjeant straight reply’d.
‘ To break the rule, I never once inclin’d ;
‘ A word is binding, as a parchment sign’d :
‘ A promise

- ‘ A promise is an obligation strong,
- ‘ And may be term'd a debt ; a debt of tongue.
- ‘ Besides, such law for others as we make
- ‘ In equity, from others we should take.
- ‘ This is my full opinion on the case ;
- ‘ This, though the proof may bring me to disgrace.
- ‘ For not in company to seem precise,
- ‘ What pleasing tale of love should I devise ?
- ‘ Full, in my way, our Chaucer stands alone,
- ‘ All Ovid's heroines has he made his own.
- ‘ And if you miss them, I affirm it, brother,
- ‘ In one book, you will find them in another.
- ‘ Nay, many a dame he adds to Ovid's store,
- ‘ Full many a gentle dame that sigh'd of yore :
- ‘ New is the language, though the story old ;
- ‘ Nor will I tell again, what he has told.
- ‘ Alcyone, in youth, he made his theme,
- ‘ Warn'd of the fate of Ceyx in a dream :
- ‘ And, grown to age, he drew with bolder pen
- ‘ The praise of women, wrong'd by faithless men ;
- ‘ A large collection, if you choose to read,
- ‘ Of injur'd females, that lament, or bleed.
- ‘ There may you see, how chaste Lucretia died,
- ‘ The deadly dagger plunging in her side :

‘ How

‘ How Thisbe breath’d her passion through the wall,
‘ And fell, since Pyramus was doom’d to fall :
‘ How Dido rag’d, when false Æneas fled,
‘ His sword the sad companion of her bed :
‘ Her plaint how Phillis to Demophoon sends,
‘ And high in air her beauteous form suspends :
‘ The poison’d gift how Deianira blam’d,
‘ Nor would have kill’d Alcides, but reclaim’d :
‘ How wail’d Hermione her luckless fates,
‘ Forc’d from the man she loves, by him she hates :
‘ Her golden locks how Ariadne tore,
‘ By Theseus left on Naxos’ desert shore :
‘ How Helen own’d a pain, that damp’d her joy,
‘ The double ill she brought to Greece and Troy :
‘ Her lord, how meek Briseis to reprove,
‘ For that his wrath was stronger than his love :
‘ How great Hypsipyle makes humble moan,
‘ By Jafon scorn’d, for all her Lemnian throne ;
‘ Whose heart Medea failing to retain,
‘ She left him to deplore their children slain :
‘ How Hero plac’d the love-alluring light,
‘ Thy guide, Leander, through the stormy night ;
‘ But when she spy’d thee, breathless, on the wave,
‘ Down from her tow’r she sought one wat’ry grave :
‘ How

- ‘ How Laodamia urg'd her forceful plea,
- ‘ Care of thyself, oh ! take, 'tis care of me :
- ‘ How Hypermnestra spar'd her husband's life,
- ‘ And nobly lost the daughter in the wife :
- ‘ How sage Penelope her spouse incites :
- ‘ He comes, who loves ; Ulysses comes, not writes :
- ‘ And how her life Alcestes greatly ends,
- ‘ To save her lord, deserted by his friends :
- ‘ For virtuous wives, as all the fair attest,
- ‘ Our bard displays, and praises with the best.
- ‘ Yet never would he write, nor could approve,
- ‘ How Canace indulg'd fraternal love :
- ‘ How Tereus robb'd a sister of her tongue ;
- ‘ Well by his wife dismember'd for the wrong :
- ‘ How his own Tyro curst Salmoneus try'd ;
- ‘ How Byblis Caunus woo'd, too near ally'd :
- ‘ By stealth how Myrrha with her father lay,
- ‘ But scarce escap'd his rage at dawn of day :
- ‘ How from Antiochus his daughter fled,
- ‘ Dragg'd by the hair to his incestuous bed.
- ‘ These he omits, as loves unworthy praise ;
- ‘ Abominations foul of ancient days.
- ‘ What from the pen of easy Ovid 'scapes,
- ‘ Where various bodies change to various shapes ;
- ‘ Where

14 PROLOGUE TO THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

‘ Where ev’ry age is search’d, and ev’ry clime,
‘ To bring creation down to Cæsar’s time :
‘ Nor mean I here such scandal to rehearse,
‘ Nor stain with such impurity my verse.
‘ Verse, did I say, unpractis’d to compose !
‘ My prose accept, or verse ally’d to prose.
‘ A Man of Law with ease you will excuse,
‘ If rude his rhyme ; Astræa is his muse.
‘ Little she knows to periods what belongs,
‘ Nor aims at strains as soft as Ovid’s songs.
‘ Yet shall she try, no matter though she fail,
‘ To tell of love a not dishonest tale ;
‘ So, as when Philomela leaves to sing,
‘ The Thrush presumes to hail the common Spring :’
Then smiling on our Host, with sober cheer,
He thus began, as you shall after hear.

CONSTAN-

CONSTANTIA :

O R,

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

HENCE, Want, ungrateful visitant, adieu,
 Pale empress, hence, with all thy meagre crew,
 Sour Discontent, and mortify'd Chagrin ;
 Lean hollow Care, and self-corroding Spleen ;
 Distress and Woe, sad parents of despair,
 With wringing hands, and ever-rueful air ;
 The tread of dun, and bum's alarming hand,
 Dire as the touch of Circe's circling wand ;
 Keen Hunger with his sharp, but famish'd eye,
 And dusky Theft, a desp'rate prompter, nigh ;
 While agues shudder to the whistling gale,
 And jointly law and infamy assail.
 But worse, oh worse than all the hideous train,
 Hot-mouth'd Reproach, and saucy writh'd Disdain ;
 These in the rear of thy assembly wait,
 Still point the anguish, and augment the weight.
 The worst oppression, who, ah who could bear,
 If Virtue, hov'ring angel, was not there ?
 Where Poverty her blasting progress bends,
 The goddess with superior wing attends.

Around

Around the fair her blest associates play,
Bask in her eye, and whiten in her ray.
Bright Purity, with firm unalter'd cheek ;
The mild, the kind, the gentle, and the meek ;
Humility's benignly placid grace,
And Innocence, with sweet seraphic face ;
Calm Piety, that smiles amidst the storm,
And Charity, with boundless wishes warm.

Bold in the front, to guard the heav'nly band,
Behold the masculine adherents stand :
Patience with Atlantean shoulders spread ;
Hail Temperance, on thrifty viands fed ;
Firm Fortitude, unknowing how to yield,
And Perseverance with his batter'd shield ;
And honest Industry, whose early toil
Wins health and plenty from the labour'd soil.
The genuine arts behind the goddes's wait,
Her reign illustrate, and improve her state ;
With eye elate here Contemplation soars,
And Learning piles his intellectual stores ;
Here mental sciences arranging shine,
Here manual crafts the various task design ;
While Diligence the busy finger plies,
And, wing'd, from rank to rank Invention flies ;

Such

Such wide extremes on Indigence attend ;
There vice assails, the virtues here defend ;
Below, the gloom of ev'ry passion storms ;
Above, calm virtue moderates and reforms ;
Here highly elevate ; there deep depreſs,
And give, or blisſ, or anguish in exceſs.

Hail Virtue ! chaste eternal beauty, hail !
Still on the foe, O goddesſ, ſtill prevail ;
The world, ere fram'd, lay open to thy view ;
You form'd the whole, and ſhall again renew :
Ere I thy arduous pleaſing toils decline,
Be want, ah, ſtill be each diſaſter mine,
Till ev'n oppreſſion be iſtelf ſubdu'd,
Nor yet a wiſh for wealth or pow'r intrude.

Nor be the poor alone thy fav'rite care ;
Fly, fly to courts, and let the mighty ſhare :
The filken lethargy at once awake,
Debauch from his iſtemp'rate opiate ſhake ;
Thence ev'ry vice and ev'ry folly drive,
That ſting, or glitter round the gorgeouſ hive ;
Before thy touch let iſſolence retire,
And vanity, an empty breath, expire ;
Hypocrify cast off the fair diſguife,
And, ſtarting, in his native gloom arife.

Now, goddess, ent'ring, view the dome of state,
Do thou inform, and give me to relate ;
Let demons obvious to my eye appear,
(Which known, could sure find no admittance here).
Amid the buzzing, busy, idle crowd,
The mix'd assembly of the mean and proud,
See, Treason smiles, a suitor to his king ;
See, Promise flutters on a cypress wing ;
Her pinion like autumnal foliage falls,
And on the pavement Disappointment crawls :
A friendly aspect Enmity assumes ;
Beneath applause, deep lurking Envy glooms.
The tempting mammon Subornation shows,
And in the patriot's zeal Diffension glows.

Oppression there with gently winning grace,
And Ignorance with solemn thinking face,
And Pride with mortify'd and Christian guise,
And Infidelity with faintly eyes,
Four rival-candidates, their monarch sue ;
Two for the bench, and for the mitre two.

Lo, there Ambition, from his height elate ;
And Pleasure lolling on a couch of state.
On these the pageantry of pomp attends ;
To these the idolizing tumult bends ;

The

The poor, the rich, the peasant, and the peer,
And all religions join in worship here.
Ambition, reaching from his airy stand,
Grapes at a globe that shuns his desp'rate hand ;
Around the glitt'ring sphere, confus'dly gay,
Crowns, truncheons, gems, and trophied radiance lay ;
But changing with alternate light and shade,
The lures appear, and vanish, shine, and fade ;
Vain as the cloudy meteor of the morn,
Which fancy forms, and transient rays adorn.

The prime rewards four suppliant sons of fame,
Luft, Rapine, Violence, and Slaughter, claim ;
And though essential happiness is due,
For toys the wise, for toys the virtuous sue.
Deluded men, the ready ambush fly ;
Dire lurking deaths behind ambition lie ;
The mourning block, keen axe, and racking wheel,
The poison'd goblet, and the bosom'd steel.

Here Pleasure on her velvet couch reclines,
Smiles to undo, and in destruction shines ;
With seeming negligence displays her charms ;
The strong she withers, and the steel'd disarms :
Imagination, specious handmaid, waits,
And serves a pomp of visionary cates :

The forceless still essayes the fresh repasts ;
But, mock'd eternally, she feeds and fasts.
Around her couch unnumber'd vot'ries meet,
And wish to share th' imaginary treat ;
Devour each morsel with desiring eye,
And for large draughts of fancy'd nectar sigh.
A thousand nymphs, of wanton sprightly mien,
Trip round the sofa, and amuse their queen :
With transports she surveys the darling train,
All daughters of her light fermenting brain :
Here laughter, mirth, and dalliance unite,
Illusive joy, and volatile delight,
Conceits, sports, gambols, titillations gay,
Hopes that allure, and projects that betray.
Prime sister of the inessential bands,
Erect, persuasive Expectation stands ;
On each pursuit she flourishes with grace,
And gives a butterfly to lead the chace ;
Or wafts a bubble on the parting gale,
And bids surrounding multitudes affail :
With sweets the fond pursuit alone is fraught,
The game still vanishes, when once 'tis caught :
Vain is the joy, but not the anguish vain,
And empty pleasure gives essential pain.

Couch'd

Couch'd as a tiger, watchful to surprise,
Grim Death beneath the false enchantress lies :
The fiends around invisibly engage ;
Guilt stings, pains rack, and disappointments rage ;
Aches, asthmas, colics, gouts, convulsions, rheums,
Remorse that gnaws, and languor that consumes.

Far other train apparent, queen ! you lead ;
True bliss attends, though arduous toils precede ;
Serene thy bosom, though thy brow severe ;
Pain points thy path, but heav'n is in thy rear :
Wondrous the influence thy pow'r supplies,
Where triumphs only from oppression rise ;
Peace springs from passion, and from weakness might ;
Calm ease from travel ; and from pain, delight ;
No sweets that vanish, and no gusts that cloy ;
Clear is the rapture, and serene the joy.
Reflection culls from ev'ry labour past,
And gives the same eternal bliss to last.
Thus by long trial, and severe distress,
You virtue truly, though severely, bles ;
Through each tradition, each recording page,
Through ev'ry nation, and through ev'ry age ;
From purpled monarchs to the rural hind,
By pain you purify'd, by toil refin'd ;

The mightier weight thy fav'rite heroes bore,
 Chief you depress'd, whom chief you meant should soar ;
 Still with the foe gave forces to prevail,
 And with this moral form'd the following tale.

While yet the Turk his early claim avow'd,
 And rul'd, beneath his sceptre Judah bow'd ;
 A set of worthy, wealthy merchants chose
 The world for trade, and Sion for repose.
 Here they select the gems of brightest rays,
 Rich stuffs, wrought silks, and golden tissues blaze ;
 Through ev'ry climate, and to ev'ry gale,
 They launch the cargo, and expand the sail ;
 Wide, with their name, their reputation grew,
 And to their mart concurring chapmen drew.

The lure of novelty, and thirst of gain,
 Now points their passage o'er the midland main :
 The Tiber now their spumy keels divide,
 And stem the flow of his descending tide.
 To Rome, imperial Rome, the traders came ;
 Rome heard the voice of their preceding fame :
 Free mart and splendid mansion she affords ;
 Joy crown'd their nights, and elegance their boards.

With mutual chat they gratify desire ;
 What's curious now relate, and now enquire ;

Alike

Alike for knowledge and for wealth they trade,
 And are with usury in both repaid.
 But fame surpris'd them with a wonder new,
 Beyond what times of brightest record drew,
 The poet's fancy, or the lover's tongue ;
 And thus the darling excellence she sung.

To crown our monarch's age with fond delight,
 His cares alleviate, and his toils requite,
 Beyond whate'er paternal wish could crave,
 Indulgent heav'n a peerless infant gave :
 The softer sex her beauteous body forms,
 But her bright soul each manly virtue warms ;
 Youth without folly, greatness without pride,
 And all that's firm to all that's sweet ally'd.
 Rich as the land by sacred promise blest,
 Lies the fair vale of her expanded breast ;
 Mild on a Parian pillar turns her head,
 Her front, like Lebanon, divinely spread ;
 There sit the chaste, the placid, and the meek,
 And morn smiles fresh upon her open cheek.
 Babes learn distinction at Constantia's sight,
 And wither'd age revives to strange delight ;
 Tumultuous wishes breathe along her way,
 Hands rise, tongues bless, and cent'ring eycs survey :

All run to bend the voluntary knee,
The blind to hear her, and the deaf to see.
Ah ! were she born to universal sway,
How gladly would the willing world obey !

And now, with wealthy manufacture stow'd,
Launch'd on the tide, their freighted vessels rode ;
The pennants vainly point the fav'ring gale,
Court the weigh'd anchor, and the op'ning sail ;
Till first the fair perfection they beheld,
Who all report (in fatal hour) excell'd :
For Syria then they ply the lab'ring oar,
And the crook'd keels divide their native shore. -

Exulting now they touch the fav'rite land,
Unlade, and moor along the yielding strand :
Now duteous on their youthful Sultan wait,
Unfold new treasures, and new tales relate.
With usual grace and curious ear he hears,
With usual courtesy and bounty cheers ;
The strange, the wondrous narratives admires,
And all that's foreign, all that's new requires.
Ah, hapless prince ! thy farther search restrain ;
Couch'd in the tale, death lurks to entertain ;
Constantia's charms their raptur'd tongues disclose,
In ev'ry word some kindling beauty glows ;

Her

Her form, her features, mien, and soul they breathe ;
Unpraise all praise, and leave all terms beneath.

Strong eloquence can picture to the blind,
Create new forms, and people all the mind ;
Can pain, or mitigate, can heal, or wound,
Enchant with sentences, and kill with sound.
The fancy'd sweets his ear impatient drinks ;
Deep on his soul the imag'd beauty sinks ;
Thro' all his thoughts, his pow'rs, she lives, she reigns,
Pants in each pulse, and thrills along his veins.

Sure through the tracts of yon celestial maze,
Where mystic planets dance, and glories blaze,
More wonders typical impress the sky,
Than e'er were trac'd with astrologic eye :
There, haply, ere his natal hour express'd,
First burn'd the flame that glow'd within his breast :
There might the nymph with previous beauty bloom,
With previous languishment the youth consume,
Expire the victim of successless care,
Die ere he liv'd, and ere he lov'd despair.
There the dear friendly stream, ere Julius bled,
Great Brutus to his dearer country shed ;
With destin'd tyranny there pride enslaves,
With destin'd virtue there the patriot saves ;

There

There Pompey glow'd for freedom and for fame ;
There Socrates, of Greece the pride and shame :
Alcides there each horrid monster flew ;
There triumph'd Sampson, the heroic Jew ;
There all, or doom'd to save, or to destroy
The chiefs who fought at Thebes, or fought at Troy.

Long mourn'd the youth, with secret woe opprest,
The latent vulture prey'd within his breast ;
Constrain'd at length, nor able to sustain
The wasting malady, and mental pain,
The sage, the bearded pillars of his state,
He calls, and privily unfolds his fate :
No mean, he cries, my cruel stars assign ;
Swift death, or else Constantia, must be mine.

Alternate, each their hopes or fears disclose,
Invent, reject, and now again propose ;
While some, with mystic rites of wondrous art,
Engage to gain the sympathetic heart ;
By philter'd science, and infernal charms,
To win the bright perfection to his arms :
Th' abhorrent scheme his gen'rous thoughts disdain,
Resolv'd to die, or justly to obtain,
And all their arguments, howe'er renew'd,
In rites of nuptial sanctitude conclude.

But

But here again new obstacles appear'd,
And much for this their latest hope they fear'd ;
Fear'd, that diversity of faith might prove
A like diversity and breach in love ;
Nor the fair Christian e'er consent to wed
A prince in Macon's sacred precepts bred.
The monarch then, " Ah ! wherefore doubt, my friends,
" Why yet dispute where love and life depends ?
" That faith must sure have most prevailing charms,
" That gives Constantia to my circling arms :
" No obstacles shall bar, no doubts deter ;
" Nor will I think, that she was form'd to err."

The voice determin'd, and imperial eye,
Leave no pretence for courtiers to reply :
With the fond speed of love's impatience warm'd,
Now embassies are sent, and treaties form'd ;
All zealous to promote the cause divine,
The pope, the church, and Christian pow'rs combine ;
The royal, long-reluctant parents yield,
And contracts are by mutual proxy seal'd.

High was the trust the regal writings bore,
And solemn the attesting parties swore,
That the young Syrian, and his barons bold,
Each sex and state, the infant, and the old,

Should

Should all Messiah's hallow'd faith embrace,
And bright Constantia be the bond of grace.

We list not here of pompous phrase to say,
What order'd equipage prepares the day;
Grooms, prelates, peers, and nymphs, a shining train,
To wait the lovely victim o'er the main:
All Rome attend in wish the lovely maid;
And heav'n their universal vows invade.

At length the day, the woful day arrives,
And ev'ry face of wonted cheer deprives;
The fatal hour admits no fond delay,
That shall the joy from ev'ry heart convey.
Ye men of Rome, your parting glory mourn;
Far from your sight your darling shall be torn:
No more the morn with usual smiles arise,
Or with Constantia blefs your longing eyes;
Of ev'ry tongue, of ev'ry pen the theme,
The daily subject, and the nightly dream.
But oh, Constantia ! say, thou fair distress'd,
What woes that hour thy lovely soul posses'd?
Its native cheek the bright carnation fled,
And, charg'd with grief, reclin'd thy beauteous head:
To lands unknown those limbs must now repair,
Nurs'd in the down of fond paternal care;

Peace

Peace spread thy nightly couch to sweet repose,
Delight around thy smiling form arose,
Each scene familiar to thy eye appear'd,
And custom long thy native soil endear'd :
Eas'd by thy bounty, at thy sight exil'd,
Grief was no more, or in thy presence smil'd ;
Each rising wish thy glad attendants feiz'd ;
To give thee pleasure, every heart was pleas'd.
But now, to strange, to foreign climes convey'd,
Strange objects must thy loathing sense invade,
Strange features to thy weeping eyes appear,
Strange accents pierce thy undelighted ear ;
In distant unacquainted bondage tied,
The gilded slave of insolence and pride,
Perhaps of form uncouth, and temper base,
Thy lord shall clasp thee with abhor'd embrace.

Thus sad the fair revolv'd, soft sorrows flow,
And all her sighing soul was loos'd to woe :
“ Father ! she cried, your fond, your wretched child ;
“ And you, my mother ; you, my mother mild !
“ My parents dear, beneath whose kindly view,
“ Blefs'd by whose looks, your cherish'd infant grew ;
“ When far, oh far from your embraces torn,
“ Will you then think a wretch like me was born ?
“ Shall

“ Shall then your child some sad remembrance claim ?
“ And some dear drops embalm Constantia’s name ?
“ Your face (ah, cruel fortune, can it be !)
“ These eyes shall never, never, never see ;
“ For ever parted by the rolling main,
“ I now must feel a lordly husband’s chain ;
“ From ev’ry friend, from ev’ry joy remove,
“ And the rough yoke of rude Barbarians prove :
“ But so may heav’n the precious issue bless,
“ And all find happiness through my distress ;
“ Woman was doom’d, ere yet the world began,
“ The prey of sorrow, and the slave of man.”

She could no more, her voice by sobs suppress’d,
And tears pour’d forth in anguish told the rest.
Wide through the crowd the sad contagion flew,
Each hoary beard is drench’d with mournful dew,
In short’ning throbs ten thousand bosoms rise,
Grief show’rs its tempest from ten thousand eyes ;
Along the shore the deep’ning groans extend,
And louder shrieks the cloudy concave rend.
Not through old Rome, when desolation reign’d,
And bleeding senators her forum stain’d,
Not in the wreck of that all dismal night,
When Ilion tumbled from her tow’ry height,

Such

Such utt'ring plaints the deep despair betray'd,
As now attend the dear departing maid.
To the tall ship with slow desponding tread,
All drown'd in grief, the beauteous victim's led :
She turn'd ; and, with an aching wistful look,
A long farewell of every field she took :
Adieu ! to all the melting crowd she cry'd ;
Adieu ! Adieu ! the melting crowd reply'd :
Her launching bark the mournful notes pursue,
And echoing hills return, Adieu ! Adieu !

Here let us leave the virgin on the main,
With all her peerage, and her pompous train ;
To Syria let the swifter muse repair,
And say what cheer prepares her welcome there.

The dame, from whom his birth the prince deriv'd,
Imperial dowager, had yet surviv'd ;
Ambitious, greedy of supreme controul,
And born with all the tyrant in her soul ;
At filial government she long repin'd,
Nor yet the reins of secret rule resign'd.
Her savage sentiments her sex belied,
And vers'd in wiles with deepest statesmen vied :
Yet o'er her soft'ning tongue, and soothing face,
The subtle varnish spread with easy grace :

The

The sage discern'd, but still confess'd her sway,
And whom their hearts detest, their fears obey.
Tenacious zeal her prophet's lore rever'd ;
The practice scorn'd, but to the text adher'd ;
And far as faith with fury could inflame,
She was indeed a most religious dame.

When she her son's determin'd bent perceiv'd,
Her breasts with cruel agitation heav'd ;
Her call, each hoary, each experienc'd friend,
In haste and midnight privacy attend ;
When dire amid the dusky throng she rose,
And from her tongue contagious poison flows.

“ Ye peers ! ye pillars of our falling state !
“ Too faithful subjects of a prince ingrate ;
“ A son, whom these detesting breasts have fed,
“ A serpent grown ; to your destruction bred ;
“ Say, shall a single hand such patriots awe ?
“ Insult your prophet, and supplant your law ?
“ First heav'n ! be all the bonds of nature broke,
“ Ere I assume the curs'd, the Christian yoke :
“ For what import these innovating rites,
“ But here a living death of all delights ?
“ Such threats, as penitence can ne'er appease,
“ The body's penance, and the mind's disease ?

“ Yet,

“ Yet, were I of some faithful hearts secure,

“ Not such the malady, but we can cure.”

She spoke, and all with swift compliance swear,
The glorious deed with all their powers to dare ;
Her charge, though ne'er so bloody, to fulfil ;
Though ne'er so dang'rous, to effect her will.

“ Doubt not a birth, she cry'd, so well conceiv'd ;

“ Great acts are more by fraud, than force achiev'd :

“ To gain the conquest we must seem to yield,

“ And feign to fly, that we may win the field.

“ Let each in public wear a Christian face,

“ And counterfeit the faintly signs of grace.

“ What though our skin the sprinkling priest baptize,

“ Our skin's unsullied, while our hearts despise.

“ Not such the tricks our bolder hands shall play,

“ When revels end the unsuspecting day ;

“ Nor such the stream our purpling points shall shed,

“ When we shall, in our turn, baptize with red.”

Ah sex ! still sweet, or bitter to extreme,

Gloomy as night, or bright as morning beam ;

No fiend may with a female's fraud compare,

No angel's purity, like woman's fair ;

To save or damn, for bliss or ruin giv'n ;]

Who has thee feels a hell, or finds a heav'n.

Smooth as the surface of the dimpled main,
 While brooding storms the gath'ring ruin rein,
 Her son with dire dissembling leer she seeks,
 And in the depth of smiling malice speaks.

“ My child ! though froward age is over wife,
 “ Let no offence against a parent rise ;
 “ Long habits gain a privilege from time,
 “ And frequent custom mellows ev'ry crime :
 “ Repugnant hence I dar'd to thwart your will,
 “ I fear'd the novelty, I fear'd the ill :
 “ But now convinc'd by Christ's superior grace,
 “ His law I rev'rence, and his faith embrace.
 “ Blest be thy bed ! thy bridal transports blest !
 “ Nor you refuse a mother's fond request :
 “ Mine be the joy to entertain the fair,
 “ To form the festival be mine the care ;
 “ To show the peers who on thy bride attend,
 “ As she in beauty, we in love transcend.”

The royal youth suspense in wonder stood ;
 Joy held his voice, and rapture thrill'd his blood :
 Around her knees his prostrate arms he threw,
 And duteous tears distill'd the grateful dew.
 Her son she rais'd, all innocent of ill,
 And smiling kiss'd whom soon she meant to kill.

At

At length the bride and all her solemn train
Pass'd o'er the danger of the midland-main:
The main is pass'd, but not the danger o'er,
The sea less cruel than the Syrian shore.
Applauding crowds the landed beauty greet,
And Judah's peers in rich procession meet;
Great was the throng, and splendid the array,
And guards arranging lin'd the glitt'ring way.
Such were the triumphs of imperial Rome,
When conquest led some darling victor home,
While meeting millions his approach withstand,
And walls, and trees, and clamber'd roofs are man'd.

All gem'd in ornaments of curious mode,
Gay in the van, the false Sultana rode,
Oft to her breast she clasp'd the heav'ly maid,
And wond'ring oft with cruel gaze survey'd.

Last came the Sultan, royal, hapless youth !
Grace in his form, and in his bosom truth ;
The last he came, for tim'rous love controll'd ;
He fear'd, and long'd, and trembled to behold :
A faint salute his fault'ring voice supply'd,
Scarce, welcome ! O divinely fair, he cry'd ;
He blush'd, and sigh'd, and gaz'd with wav'ring view,
Nor dares to hope the blissful vision true.

Thus onward to a neigb'ring town they far'd,
In purpos'd pomp and regal state prepar'd :
And here the old maternal fiend invites
To order'd feasts, and dearly bought delights.
Down fit the guests, triumphing clarions blow,
Drums beat, mirth sings, and brimming goblets flow ;
In boundless revel ev'ry care is drown'd,
And clamour shouts, and freedom laughs around.

Ah ! hapless state of ev'ry human mind !
Wrapt in the present, to the future blind ;
In the gay vapour of a lucky hour,
Light folly mounts, and looks with scorn on power ;
Nor sees how swift the tides of fortune flow,
The swelling happiness, and ebbing woe ;
That man should ne'er indulge, or bliss, or care,
The prosp'rous triumph, or the wretch despair ;
So close, so sudden each reverse succeeds,
And mischief treads where'er success precedes.

And now the night, with brooding horrors still,
Gloom'd from the brow of each adjacent hill ;
Slow heav'd her bosom with distemper'd breath,
And o'er her forehead hung the weights of death.
Oppress'd with sleep, and drown'd in fumy wine,
The prostrate guards their regal charge resign :

But

But far within, still wakeful to delight,
The prince and peers protract the festal night ;
When from the portal, lo ! a sudden gloom
Projects its horrors through the spacious room ;
Fearful and dark the ruffian bands appear,
The dire Sultana storming in the rear.
The bloody task invading treason plies ;
Quick, and at once alarm'd the nobles rise :
But these, as faith or faction led, divide,
And, traitors most, with ent'ring traitors side ;
Boards, bowls, and seats o'erturn'd the pavement strow,
Of blood with wine the mingling currents flow ;
Vain is the fear that wings their feet for flight,
They fall who basely fly or bravely fight :
With screams and groans the echoing courts resound,
And gasping Romans bite the trait'rous ground.

Say, royal Syrian ! in that hour of death,
Say, didst thou tamely then resign thy breath ?
Surprise and shame, and love and boundless rage,
Flash from his eyes and in his breast engage :
Threat'ning aloft, his flaming steel he drew,
And swift to save his lov'd Constantia flew ;
Before his bride a beauteous bulwark stands,
Now presses on, and backwards bears the bands.

Bold to his aid surviving Romans spring ;
Some Syrians too could dare to join their king :
Invaded late, they in their turn invade,
And traitors are with mutual death repaid.
But what may courage, what may strength avail,
Where still o'erpow'ring multitudes assail ?
Where number with increasing number grows,
And ev'ry sword must match a thousand foes ?
As melting snows with gradual waste subside,
So sink the warriors from their hero's side ;
Thinn'd are the remnants of his bleeding train,
And scarce, but scarce th' unequal strife sustain,
Their veins exhausted, and o'erthrust their might,
And struggling, but to fall the last, they fight.

The monarch thus on ev'ry side distrest'd,
And hope extinguish'd in his valiant breast,
Turn'd to his queen, he sent the parting look,
And brief th' eternal last adieu he took.

“ Since here, he cry'd, our hapless loves must end,
“ Where this arm fails, may mightier heav'n defend :
“ This is my last, my only fond desire ;
“ Too bless'd am I, who in thy cause expire.”
So saying, with recruited pow'rs he glows,
Exalted treads, and overlooks his foes :

Of

Of more than mortal size the warrior seems,
And terror from his eye imperial streams.
The circling host his single voice defies ;
Amid the throng, with fury wing'd, he flies ;
Deep bites his sword, in heaps on heaps they fall,
Hands, arms, and heads bespread the fanguin'd hall :
Untir'd with toil, resistless in his course,
Disdain gave fury, and despair gave force :
As here, and there, his conqu'ring steps he bends,
Down his fair form the purpling stream descends ;
Exhausted nature would persuade to yield ;
But courage still tenacious holds the field.
As when the lamp its wav'ring light essays,
The source consum'd, that fed the vital blaze,
Extinguish'd now its kindly flame appears,
And now aloft a livelier radiance rears ;
Subsides by fits, by fits again aspires,
And bright, but doubtful, burn its fainting fires ;
Till re-collected to one force of light,
Sudden she flashes into endless night.
So the brave youth the blaze of life renewes,
Reels, stands, defends, attacks, and still subdues ;
Till ev'ry vein, and ev'ry channel drain'd,
One last effort his valiant arm sustain'd :

As lightning swift, he sped the latest blow,
And greatly fell, expiring on his foe.
As should an oak within some village stand,
Young, tall, and strait, the fav'rite of the land,
Beneath the dews of heav'n sublime he grows,
Beneath his shade the weary'd find repose ;
To deck his boughs, each morn the maidens rise,
And youths around his form contest the prize :
Yet haply if a sudden storm descend,
Sway'd by the blast, his beauteous branches bend ;
But vig'rous to their tow'ring height recoil,
Maintain the combat, and outbrave the toil ;
Till the red bolt with levell'd ruin shooths,
And cuts the pillar'd fabric from the roots ;
Swift falls the beauty o'er a length of ground,
The nymphs and swains incessant mourn around.
So did the youth with living form excel,
So fair, so tall, and so lamented fell :
Relenting traitors would revive the dead,
And weep the blood their ruthleſs weapons shed :
One tender pang the dire Sultana felt ;
And nature, spite of hell, compels to melt.

While sudden thus each bloody arm suspends,
And round their prince the satiate tumult bends,

Regardleſs

Regardless of her fate, Constantia goes
 Through pointed javelins, and a host of foes ;
 Amaze before the daring virgin yields,
 And innocence from ev'ry weapon shields ;
 Till mourning by the great remains she stood,
 And o'er her lover pour'd the copious flood.
 " Ah, valiant arm ! a waste of worth in vain !
 " Ah, royal youth, the cry'd, untimely slain !
 " Oh ! had I perish'd ere I reach'd thy shore,
 " The surge devour'd, or wat'ry monsters tore,
 " To bless the world your worth had yet surviv'd,
 " Nor I, too fatally belov'd, arriv'd.
 " 'Tis I who have this dear effusion shed ;
 " For me, for me, a luckless bride, you bled.
 So saying—furious, the Sultana cries :
 " Strike, strike, the source of all our mischief dies." }
 " Yes, strike," the bright, th' intrepid maid replies. }
 But vainly this consents, or that commands :
 Heav'n check'd their hearts, and pity bound their
 hands ;
 At once a thousand javelins rife in air ;
 A thousand wishes whisper, Ah ! forbear ;
 Recoiling arms the bloody task refuse,
 And beauty with resistless charm subdues.

Alone

Alone relentless, the Sultana cries,
“ ‘Tis well, the death she wish’d, may still suffice :
“ Hence with that form, that knows so well to reign,
“ Hence with the witch, and plunge her in the main ;
“ Her passage thence to Rome she may explore,
“ And tell her welcome on the Syrian shore.”

So saying, quick to a selected band
She gave to execute the dire command :
Reluctant to the charge, they yet obey,
And to the shore the mourning fair convey ;
Slow as she mov’d, soft sorrows bathe the ground ;
Her guards too melt, and pitying weep around ;
Though vers’d in blood, detest the stern commands,
And feel their hearts rebellious to their hands.
When now upon th’ appointed beach they stood,
That look’d with horror o’er the deep’ning flood,
Each eyd his fellow, with relenting look,
And each to each the cruel task forsook ;
With distant awe the heav’ly maid survey,
Nor once her harm in act or thought essay.
The still suspense at length their leader broke,
And, bow’d before the trembling beauty, spoke.
“ Oh thou ! endow’d with more than mortal charms,
“ Who ev’ry foe of all his force disarms,

“ Say,

“ Say, how shall we our pow'r or will employ,
“ Where both are weak to spare thee or destroy ?
“ Both impotent alike, our pow'r and will,
“ The means to save thee, or the thoughts to kill ?
“ Yet one extreme may cruelly remain,
“ To yield thee haply to the pitying main ;
“ And heav'n, who form'd thee so divinely fair,
“ If heav'n has pow'r, will sure have will to spare.”

He said ; the rest assent, and to the bay
With secret step the virgin-bride convey.
Convenient here a Roman bark they find ;
They hoist the hasty canvas to the wind :
The bark, with Roman wealth and plenty stow'd,
Now launching with the lonely sailor rode ;
The gale from shore with ready rapture blew,
And to her vessel bore the last adieu.

Now, stain'd with blood, the self-convictèd night
Fled from the face of all-enquiring light ;
And morn, unconscious of the murd'rous scene,
O'er Syria, guilty Syria, rose serene.
The mountains sink before Constantia's eyes,
Wing'd o'er the surge, her bounding galley flies ;
From sight of land and human face conveys,
The skies alone above, and all around the seas.

“ Go,

“ Go, lovely mariner ! imperial fair !
“ The warring winds and angry ocean dare ;
“ Strange climes and spheres, a lone advent’rer, view,
“ New to the main, and to misfortune new ;
“ Without the chart or polar compafs steer,
“ Nor storms, in which the stoutest tremble, fear.
“ But ill those limbs, for gentle office form’d,
“ And in the down of nightly softnes warm’d,
“ Shall now, obsequious to the ruder gale,
“ Command the frozen cord and pond’rous sail ;
“ Shall now, beneath the wat’ry sky obscure,
“ The nightly damp, and piercing blast endure.”

Thus, all disconsolate, and sore distress’d,
And sorrow heaving in her beauteous breast,
Down sinks the fair, her hands in anguish rise,
And up to heav’n she lifts her streaming eyes.
“ Oh thou ! she said, whence ev’ry being rose,
“ In whom they safe exist, and soft repose ;
“ Fix’d in whose pow’r, and patent to whose eye,
“ Immense, those copious worlds of wonders lie ;
“ To me, the meanest of thy works, descend ;
“ To me, the last of ev’ry being, bend ;
“ Since not exempt, in thy paternal care,
“ The lowest triumph, and minutest share.

“ Thy

“ Thy subjects all, and all their sov'reign know,
“ The seas that eddy, and the winds that blow;
“ The winds thy ruling inspiration tell;
“ The seas exulting in thy presence swell:
“ O'er these, o'er those, supreme, do thou preside;
“ For I desire no other star to guide:
“ In want, and weakness, be thy pow'r display'd,
“ And thou assist, where else no arm can aid.
“ But if—(as surely ev'ry mortal must)
“ If now I hasten to my native dust,
“ From the dread hour, and this devouring deep,
“ The spark of deathless animation keep;
“ Then may my soul, as bright instinctive flame,
“ Aspiring then, thy kindred radiance claim;
“ Or to some humbler heav'n the trembler raise,
“ Though there the last, the first to sing thy praise;
“ Some lowly vacant seat, Eternal, deign,
“ Nor be creation and redemption vain.”

So pray'd the maid, and peace, a wonted guest,
Sought the known mansion of her spotless breast;
To ev'ry peril arm'd, and pain resign'd,
Cheer'd in her looks, and patience in her mind.

The wind fresh blowing from the Syrian shore,
Swift through the floods her spooming vessel bore;

Long

Long breath'd the current of the eastern gale,
And swell'd th' expanse of each distended sail ;
And now the hills of Candia rise to view,
As ev'ning clouds and settled vapours blew ;
And now (still driv'n before the orient blast)
Morea and her length'ning capes are pass'd :
Now land again her wifful prospect flies,
And gives th' unvarying ocean to her eyes ;
Till Malta's rocks, emerging from the main,
The circling war of earth and sea maintain ;
Alike unknown, each varying clime appear'd ;
The land and main alike the virgin fear'd :
While ev'ry coast, her wand'ring eyes explore,
Reminds her soul of Syria's hostile shore,
And more than ev'ry monster seas can yield,
From man, from man, she begs that heav'n would shield.
Full many a day, and many a night forlorn,
Through shelves, and rocks, and eddying tempest borne,
Through drizzling sky, and nightly damp severe,
No fire to warm, no social face to cheer ;
On many a meal of tainted viands fed,
The chill blast whistling round her beauteous head ;
The pensive innocence attends her fate,
Amidst surrounding deaths and storms sedate.

Ye

Ye filken sons of affluence and pride,
Whose fortunes roll a soft superfluous tide;
Who yet on visionary wants refine,
And, rack'd with false fantastic woes, repine;
And ye, whom penury and sharp distress,
With bitter, but salubrious med'cine blest;
Behold that sex, whose softness men despise;
Behold a maid, who might instruct the wise,
Give patience precedent, fierce frenzy swage,
And with philosophy new-form the sage.
For her the tides of regal fulness flow'd;
For her oppression heap'd the cumbrous load;
In affluence humble, in misfortune great,
She stands the worst alternatives of fate.

At length, her galley wing'd before the blast,
Swift launching, through the straits of Ceuta pass'd;
And winding now before the varying gale,
Tempestuous Auster rends her lab'ring sail;
Hispania's realm th' obsequious vessel coasts,
Now Gallia's surge the beauteous burthen boasts;
Till, last, Britannia's wave the charge receives,
And from th' Atlantic main exalting heaves;
The destin'd freight with pleas'd emotion bore,
And gently wafted to Northumbria's shore.

But

But haply now 'twere obvious to demand,
How, borne from Solyma's far-distant land,
Through many a clime, and strait, that might restrain,
The gulf of winter, and the whelming main,
Britannia's coast should fix the wand'ring maid,
Through such a length of devious tracts convey'd.

“ Say first, when ships in dizzy whirlwinds wheel,
“ Who points the fervour of the am'rous steel ?
“ Wing'd by whose breath the bidden tempests blow ?
“ Heav'd in whose fulness mighty oceans flow ?
“ Yet what are winds that blow ? or seas that roll ?
“ The globe stupendous ? or the poising pole ?
“ What the seven planets on their axes spun ?
“ What the wide system of our cent'ring sun ?
“ A point, an atom, to the ambient space,
“ Where worlds on worlds in circling myriads race :
“ Yet these th' inanimate volution keep,
“ And roll elliptic through the boundless deep ;
“ While one hand weighs the infinite suspense,
“ Th' insensate loads and measures the immense ;
“ Within, without, through height and depth presides,
“ With equal arm the bark or planet guides.
“ By thee, uplifted through the pathless skies,
“ With conscious plume, the birds of passage rise ;
“ Through

“ Through thee their patent longitude is known,
“ The stated climate, and the varying zone.
“ Thy will informs the universal plan,
“ The ways of angels, and the ways of man ;
“ The moral and material world connects,
“ Through each, supreme, both governs and inspects ;
“ Conducts the blood through each arterial round,
“ Conducts each system through the vast profound ;
“ One rule the joint, the boundless model forms,
“ And the small ant to love of order warms ;
“ Alike, through high and low, and great and small,
“ Nor aught's mysterious, or mysterious all.”

What time the wasting tide and fav'ring blast
The fair on Britain's fated region cast ;
Young Alla then Northumbria's sons obey'd,
Whose substituted sceptre Offa sway'd ;
Illustrious Offa, who in worth excell'd
Whate'er the rolls of Saxon heroes held :
Alone Rodolphus, to the chief ally'd,
Excell'd in arms, but much excell'd in pride.
High on the brow of a commanding steep,
And full in prospect of the eastern deep,
His seat, address'd for war, as for repose,
And fix'd with elegance, brave Offa chose.

And now the hero, at his wonted hour,
Where trees o'er-arching form'd the sylvan bow'r,
With Hermilda sought the evening-air,
His bride, the fairest of the Saxon fair ;
When from the main, and obvious to the view,
Th' apparent wreck their fix'd attention drew,
And quickly, by innate compassion led,
Attended to the neigb'ring shore they sped :
Constantia here sole mariner they found,
Admiring gaze, and filently furround :
Her eyes to heav'n the grateful charmer rais'd,
And with mute thanks of swift acceptance prais'd ;
Then turn'd, with suppliant mien her arms extends,
And lowly at their feet for mercy bents.
Though Pagans, yet, with native virtues blest,
The sentiment humane inform'd their breast :
They her sad narrative of woes enquire,
Prompt to redrefs, as courteous to desire :
With moving eloquence the maid began,
And through a length of strange disasters ran ;
What truth requir'd, with artless grace reveal'd,
What prudence check'd, with graceful art conceal'd ;
Pathetic gave her suff'ring to the view ;
But o'er her state a specious cov'ring threw.

Sweet

Sweet flow'd the accents of her gentle tongie,
Attention on the mournful music hung :
Each heart a sympathetic anguish felt ;
Who saw that face, and could refuse to melt ?
Great Offa's bride, with answ'ring woes distress'd,
With streaming eyes and clasping arms caref's'd ;
Officious now to please, and prompt to aid,
They to the palace lead the peerless maid ;
With feast, and song, and social aspect cheer,
And as of more than mortal mould revere.

Here, pleas'd with privacy, and long content,
Her days the universal charmer spent ;
To office apt, and each obliging art,
She kindly stole the voluntary heart ;
Ador'd around, a mental empire gain'd,
And still a queen through ev'ry bosom reign'd.

What winning pow'r on beauty's charm attends !
The rude it softens, and the bigot bends.
What precept from Constantia's lips can fail ?
What truth so musical, and not prevail ?
Persuasive while she pleads, the priest might learn,
The deaf find ears, and ev'n the blind discern :
Soon through the house of gen'rous Offa spread,
Her pleasing tongue its sacred influence shed ;

And all the cordial profelytes of grace,
The Chrifitian law, the law of love embrace.
But ah, sweet maid ! how ſhort is thy repole !
Nor hope that here thy ſcenes of ſuff'ring close ;
Heav'n ſpeeds the planet that o'er-rul'd thy birth,
And haſteſ to make one angel even on earth.

Rodolphus, to the Saxon chief ally'd,
Whose ſtrength of limb with mightieſ giants vy'd,
Of feature crude, and iſolent of foul,
Whose heart nor knew, or mercy, or controul :
He ſaw, and though to deeds of discord bred,
He ſaw, and on the lovely viſion fed ;
Swift through his veins the ſulph'rous poison run,
But wo'men ſeem'd all obvious to be won.
Malicious fervour prompts him to enjoy ;
Dire is the love that's eager to deſtroy :
Vows, pray'rs, and oaths, and menaces he try'd,
And priz'd alike the proſtitute or bride :
But when repul'sd with merited diſdain,
He found all threats, as all intreaties, vain :
The flame, that gloomy in his boſom burn'd,
To deadly hate by ſwift tranſition turn'd,
And nightly, in his dark deſigning foul,
Dire future ſcenes and ſchemes iſfern'al roll.

Mean

Mean time, the sons of hostile Scotia arm,
And fame through Albion gives the loud alarm :
Young Alla at the warlike call arose,
And speeds with answ'ring boldness to oppose ;
While Offa with glad heart, and honours due,
To welcome his approaching sov'reign flew.

And now Rodolphus, of whose baleful breast
The fiends and ev'ry fury stood posses'd,
On ills of cruellest conception bent,
To perpetrate his deadly purpose meant.

All wrapt in clouds from heav'n's nocturnal steep,
Mid-darkness hung, and weigh'd the world to sleep ;
When Offa's confort and the Roman maid,
By unsuspecting innocence betray'd,
Divinely pious, and divinely fair,
Tir'd with long vigil and the nightly pray'r,
Together lock'd in calm oblivion lay,
Not both to rise and greet returning day.
Rodolphus unperceiv'd invades the room,
His bosom darker than the midnight gloom ;
Dire o'er the gentle fair the felon stands,
A poniard thirsting in his impious hands.
As should some cottager with hourly care
Two lambs, his sole delight and substance, rear,

With fondness at his rural table fed,
Beneath his eye, and in his bosom bred,
Till, fierce for blood, and watchful to devour,
Some prowling wolf perceives the absent hour,
His nightly tread through some fly postern bents,
And the meek pair with savage fury rends :
So sweet, so innocent, the fair ones lay,
So stern the human savage views his prey,
His steel swift plung'd through Hermigilda's breast,
From the pure form dismiss'd the purer guest ;
Without one sigh her gentle soul expires,
And, wak'd in bliss, the wondrous change admires,
Beyond, beyond what utt'rance e'er can name,
Or vision of ecstatic fancy frame.
Not so, bright maid ! thy harder fate intends ;
A simple death was only meant for friends :
For thee, he hoards the fund of future ill,
And spares with tenfold cruelty to kill.
Close by Constantia, lovely sleeping maid,
His reeking steel the murd'rous ruffian laid ;
Revolv'd within his breast new mischiefs brew,
And, smiling horribly, the fiend withdrew.
Thick darkness yet withstood approaching day,
And camp'd upon the western summits lay,

And

And scarce the straggling rays of orient light,
Excursive, pierc'd the paler realms of night,
Their passage through Constantia's casement won,
And view'd the brightest form beneath the sun ;
When the first glories of her op'ning eyes
With prompt, with early elevation rise,
Its wing tow'rds heaven her waking soul extends,
And in a rhapsody of praise ascends.
But, ah ! not long those lively transports burn ;
Confus'd, alarm'd, her thoughts to earth return :
All chill, and in the vital current drown'd,
Pale at her side, her lovely friend she found.
A cloud of horror quick involv'd the fair,
And utt'ring shrieks expres'd the loud despair.
Wak'd to her griefs, the scar'd domestics rose ;
In rush'd the train, shrill echoing to her woes,
O'er the pale dame a mourning torrent shed,
And with repeated cries invoke the dead.
Rodolphus too, with well-dissembled fears,
And face of busy, feign'd concern, appears ;
From heav'n's high wrath, with swift perdition sped,
He calls down vengeance on the guilty head ;
Apparent zeal his earnest visage fires,
And loud the murd'rer for himself enquires.

With bloody marks of dire conjecture stain'd,
Constantia, hapless virgin, stands arraign'd :
The fair with fears her guiltless cause essay's ;
But, ah ! each specious circumstance betrays.
Rude cords around her polish'd arms they strain'd ;
Strong pleads the innocent, but pleads in vain.
Far were thy friends, Constantia ! lovely maid !
Far distant all, that had the pow'r to aid ;
From guilt, from death, from infamy to save,
Or shed a tear upon a stranger's grave.

And now the tale, with deadly tidings fraught,
To Offa's ear a speedy courier brought.
Heart-pierc'd with anguish, stood the mourning chief ;
No plaints express th' unutterable grief ;
No sighs exhale, no streaming sorrows flow,
Fix'd and immoveable in speechless woe.
Compassion touch'd the gen'rous Alla's breast,
For his brave subject, for his friend distress'd :
Each circumstance the royal youth enquires,
And the dire act his just resentment fires.
By specious proofs of false suggestion led,
He vows full vengeance on Constantia's head ;
To doom the luckless innocent he speeds,
And in his wrath the previous victim bleeds.

Fame

Fame flies before with voluntary wing,
A thousand distant shouts proclaim their king ;
Pour'd from all parts, the populace unite,
And on his form infatiate feed their sight :
For Alla bright in each perfection shone,
That grac'd the cottage, or enrich'd the throne :
The nerve Herculean brac'd his youthful arm,
His cheek imbib'd the virgin's softest charm ;
Mild was his soul, all spotless as his form ;
His virtues not severe, but chaste and warm ;
His manners sweet and sprightly, yet sincere ;
His judgment calm and deep, yet quick and clear :
Graceful his speech, above the flow'rs of art ;
Open his hand, more bounteous yet his heart ;
As mercy soft, kind, social, and humane ;
Vice felt alone, that Alla held the rein.
To all the pride of courts, and pomp of show,
The brightest ornament, yet greatest foe.

Within, without, thus rich in ev'ry grace,
And all the angel in his soul and face ;
Not form'd to feel love's passion, but impart,
No charms were yet found equal to his heart :
For him each virgin sigh'd, but sigh'd in vain,
By him unpitied, since unknown the pain.

Detesting

Detesting flattery, yet fond of fame,
Through deadly fields he sought a deathless name ;
Still foremost there, he sprung with youthful heat,
And war, not love, gave Alla's breast to beat ;
Each foe he conquer'd, and each friend retain'd,
And scepter'd in his subjects' bosoms reign'd.

And now arriv'd, severe in solemn state,
(Whence no appeal) the grand tribunal sat ;
Great Alla, thron'd conspicuous to the view,
Attention, love, and cent'ring rev'rence drew :
In form, the deadly proces's strait began,
Wide through the crowd a doubtful murmur ran :
Rodolphus chief the friendless pris'ner charg'd,
Enforc'd the pain, and on the guilt enlarg'd.
The fair unknown to her defence they cite ;
Guarded she comes, as pure as angels bright ;
As though delight and grief at once combin'd,
And fled to her, displeas'd with all mankind ;
Or as delight would grief, in grief excel,
Or grief could find delight with her to dwell.
Pensive she moves, majestically slow,
And with a pomp of beauty decks her woe :
All murmurs, silenc'd by her presence, cease,
And from her eye the yielding crowd gives place ;

Ev'n

Ev'n Alla's looks his softening soul confess'd,
And all resentment died within his breast.

But, ah ! while shame with injur'd honour vies,
And yet her tongue its fault'ring task denies,
More than all phrase, or studied quaint address,
Her downcast eyes and speaking looks express.

At length pathetic, with a starting tear,
She thus to bow'd attention charm'd the ear.

“ Where may the wretched for protection bend ?

“ Or when, ah ! when shall my misfortunes end ?

“ Sure persecution in the grave will cease,

“ And death bestow, what life denies me, peace.

“ Driv'n from before the face of human-kind,

“ Earth, air, and sea, with cruel man combin'd :

“ Each hour, each element prepar'd a foe,

“ And nature seem'd exhausted in my woe.

“ At length, with ev'ry grace and virtue crown'd,

“ One friend, one pitying faithful friend, I found ;

“ With her, retir'd, to pass my days I chose,

“ And here presum'd to taste a late repose :

“ But peace to me alike all climes refuse,

“ And mischief to the farthest pole pursues ;

“ 'Tis even a crime to be Constantia's friend,

“ Nor less than death to those who would defend.

“ Ah,

“ Ah, Hermilda ! could my forfeit life
“ To the fond husband give the faithful wife ;
“ From death recal thy chastely featur'd charms,
“ And yield thee to the gen'rous Offa's arms ;
“ Ah ! gladly would I then resign my breath,
“ If life so dear could be reviv'd by death.
“ But thus to die with soul suspicion stain'd,
“ For murder, murder of my friends, arraign'd !
“ Alas ! unskill'd in ev'ry cruel art,
“ Had I the power to hurt, I want the heart :
“ No creature e'er Constantia's malice felt,
“ Ev'n suff'ring foes have taught my heart to melt,
“ My heart, for birds, for insects oft distres'd,
“ And pity is its known, its only guest.
“ Oh, youth ! thy happy people's boasted theme,
“ Oh, Alla ! sacred to the breath of fame,
“ To whom subjected realms their rights submit,
“ Who, thron'd in judgment, like an angel sit ;
“ Still more extensive be thy guardian care,
“ And let the innocent, the stranger share.”

Here rudely on her plea Rodolphus broke,
And, all inflam'd, and interrupting, spoke :
“ Lift not, O king, to that bewitching tongue :
“ So sweetly false the tempting Syrens sung.

“ Her

“ Her words would give the knotted oak an ear,
“ And charm the moon from her enchanted sphere.
“ That by her hand our dear relation bled,
“ This fword shall witness on her guilty head,
“ Whatever champion, or bold odds oppose,
“ And, arm'd by justice, dare a thousand foes :
“ Then be her purity by combat try'd,
“ And by the conquering arm let heav'n decide.”
“ Alas ! O Alla, cry'd the trembling maid,
“ My sex not arms but innocence must aid :
“ Helpless I stand, and distant ev'ry friend,
“ That has the pow'r or courage to defend.
“ If justice is ordain'd to crown the strong,
“ Then the weak arm is ever in the wrong ;
“ The hawk may triumph in his lawlesse deeds,
“ While doom'd beneath his gripe the turtle bleeds.
“ Yet that I'm guiltless ev'n my charge admits,
“ And malice, meaning to arraign, acquits :
“ What though the fword lay treach'rous at my side,
“ Sure guilt could never want the craft to hide ;
“ The spots of bloody circumstance explain,
“ That inward truth fears no exterior stain ;
“ And, last, my capture with the slain implies,
“ That guilt, not innocence, from vengeance flies.

“ I fear

“ I fear not death, but that surviving shame,
 “ Which must to ages blast my spotless name ;
 “ Be that from taint of guilty censure freed,
 “ And all that malice can inflict, decreed.”

Thus while she spake, with secret passions toss'd,
 And in a world of new found wonders lost,
 Scarce Alla could his struggling heart controul ;
 Fix'd were his eyes, but restless was his soul ;
 His breast with various agitation burn'd,
 Now pale, now red, his varying aspect turn'd :
 Her accents dwell upon his list'ning ears,
 When now she ceas'd, delighted still he hears,
 Her form with chang'd, with fev'rish look surveys,
 And could for ever hear, for ever gaze.

At length collected, as from bonds he broke,
 And with cold speech and feign'd indiff'rence spoke.
 “ Thy charge, bright maid, my secret soul acquits ;
 “ But public law no private voice admits :
 “ Kings sit not here, with arbitrary sense
 “ To form new laws, or cavil, but dispense ;
 “ Though law is fallible, yet law should sway,
 “ And kings, more fallible than law, obey.
 “ Say, gallant warriors ! who, unmatch'd in arms,
 “ May yield uncensur'd to resistless charms,

“ Say,

“ Say, is there one who, singularly brave,
“ At his own peril greatly dares to save,
“ From pain, from death, from slander to defend,
“ And give the stranger and the fair a friend.” T

The hero said, but mute was ev'ry tongue,
Blank ev'ry face, and ev'ry nerve unstrung ;
So much Rodolphus, never match'd in arms,
Each weaker hand and conscious heart alarms ;
So was the giant fam'd for brutal pow'r,
Strode like an arch, and menac'd like a tow'r.
Then Alla, “ Soon as Phosphor's dewy ray
“ Shall gild the shade, bright promiser of day,
“ Prepar'd and meted with the morning light,
“ Be the rail'd barrier, and the lifts of fight ;
“ Then, ere the sun, swift mounting up the sky,
“ Views the wide world with his meridian eye,
“ While issuing from the trumpet's brazen throat,
“ Defiance loudly breathes its martial note ;
“ If haply heaven, not impotent to aid,
“ With interposing arm protect the maid,
“ Some angel or unlook'd for champion send,
“ And with prevailing ministry defend,
“ Freed be the fair, and spotless be her fame ;
“ Ere evening else she feeds the hungry flame.”

So spake the prince, descending from his throne,
Sad through the concourse went the length'ning groan:
The maid to death inevitably doom'd,
A guiltless victim ev'ry heart presum'd;
To her they consecrate the pitying tear,
Nor e'er till then could think their prince severe.

Constantia (when with firm though hopelesseyt
She now perceiv'd the fatal hour drew nigh)
In conscious innocence erects her head,
With doubt exiled, all care and terror fled;
Death stole from triumph to adorn her state,
And gave a smile beyond the reach of fate.
All night in pray'r and mental song, the maid
(With angels choir'd) her soul for heav'n array'd;
Light from her heart as summer's careles robe,
Dropt each affection of this sin-worn globe;
O'er honour, late so lov'd, o'er brutal foes,
And ev'ry sense of mortal coil she rose,
Till tow'r'd the dawn she gently sunk to rest,
With all elysium open'd in her breast.

Gray Morning now, involv'd in rising dew,
O'er the cap'd hills her streaming mantle threw,
While far beyond the horizontal sun,
With beam of intersected brightness shone,

Gold

Gold pav'd o'er ocean stretch'd his glitt'ring road,
And to the shore the length'ning radiance glow'd.
Full in his fight, and open to the main,
Concurring squadrons throng'd Northumbria's plain ;
To learn what fate attends the foreign fair,
Each sex and age in mingling routs repair,
Whom pour'd by millions to the listed field,
Dispeopled towns and emptied hamlets yield.
Within the lists, conspicuous to the sight,
Rode the proud stature of the Saxon knight ;
His mien, with thirst of opposition fir'd,
Appear'd to menace what it most desir'd,
Gave all to wish some champion for the fair,
Gave all to wish the fight, but none to dare :
His boldsdefiance o'er the measur'd ground,
The brazen blasts of winding clarions sound,
While strong-lung'd heralds challenge to the fight,
And seem at once to threaten and invite.

And now, expectant of the murd'rous flame,
In sable pomp the lovely victim came ;
On her all looks and cent'ring hearts were fix'd,
Love, grief, and awe, with soft compassion mix'd :
To heav'n the voice of wide affliction cries,
Earth drinks the tribute of ten thousand eyes,

Such sighs as from the dying breast expire,
And tears, as meant to quench a world on fire.
To the tall pyre, in sad procession led,
The tranquil maid ascends her sylvan bed,
And fearless on the funeral summit plac'd,
Her seat, of fearful preparation, grac'd.
Hence with wide gaze she threw her eyes around,
Nor Alla, cruel, lovely Alla, found :
“ Ah ! soft she said, where's this heroic youth ?
“ So fam'd for clemency, so fam'd for truth,
“ So sage, so cautious in the casuist's chair,
“ Too firm to deviate, and too just to spare ;
“ To strangers cruel, though to subjects kind,
“ In law discerning, yet to mercy blind.
“ Why comes not he to feast his savage eyes,
“ And view the pains he can so well devise ?
“ Heav'n fram'd thee, Alla, with exterior art,
“ Soften'd thy form, but left a flinty heart ;
“ Too perfect else had been the beauteous plan,
“ And Alla had been something more than man.”
Thus while she spoke, a distant murmur rose,
As when the wind through rustling forests blows,
And gathering now still louder and more near,
To mute attention turn'd each lift'ning ear.

Distinctly

Distinctly heard along the listed ground,
To trumpets now shrill answering trumpets sound,
A clam'rous cheer from rank to rank extends,
And sudden shout the deafen'd welkin rends.
Strait (usher'd to the field with loud acclaim)
A knight unknown and unattended came ;
No trophy'd boast, no outward shine of arms,
Nor love device, with quaint attraction, charms ;
Unplum'd the motion of his sable crest,
And black the guardian corslet on his breast ;
Black was the steed that bore him to the field,
And black the terror of his ample shield.

As when to slake Iernes' fev'rish plain,
And check the Dog-star's short but sultry reign,
A cloud, full-freighted with the coming storm,
Black-brow'd o'er ocean lifts its cumbrous form,
Dread to the shore its gloomy progress bends,
And charg'd with heav'n's avenging bolt suspends ;
So to the field the gloomy champion show'd,
So charg'd with mercy, as with vengeance rode.
Where the bright victim bless'd the circling view,
Close to the pyre the sable warrior drew ;
Guilty, aloud, or innocent ? he cry'd :
Ah ! guiltless, so help heav'n ! the maid reply'd :
So by this arm, he said, may heav'n for thee decide ! }

Surpris'd Rodolphus stood, abash'd the bold,
And like a torrent in mid course controll'd ;
Abash'd to find, that any mortal wight
Could singly dare to match his matchless might.
But soon, of conscious force, and scorn, and pride,
With two-fold fury swell'd th' impetuous tide,
Resistless, dreadful, in his wrath he rose,
For courage still with opposition grows.
Attending heralds strait divide the field,
And the dire interval for combat yield.
To either goal retir'd each threatful knight,
Fierce through restraint, and trembling for the fight ;
On each by turns was ev'ry look intent,
Now here, now there, with swift emotion bent:
Perch'd on the summit of the stranger's crest,
Here conquest seem'd to ev'ry eye confess ;
Not long confess'd, for from his rival, there,
Again the varying judgment learns despair ;
For ev'ry wish assur'd the stranger's part,
And quick expectance throbb'd in ev'ry heart.
Fix'd in his seat, each waits the dread career,
And in each rest firm sits the pond'rous spear ;
Each conscious steed impatient beats the ground,
Eager and wan was ev'ry face around :

The

The signal given, they vanish from the goals,
Earth backward spurn'd from either courser rolls ;
Space gathers quick beneath their nimble feet,
And horse to horse (tremendous shoc^k) they meet.
Nor yet blind wrath or headlong valour rul'd,
More forceful was their force, by judgment cool'd :
The deadly aim each hostile eye selects,
Each eye too marks where either arm directs ;
With art they ward, and with dread action wield,
Point with the lance, and parry with the shield.
Full at the bosom of his active foe,
Rodolphus levell'd the resistless blow ;
But from his oblique buckler glanc'd the spear,
Which else nor targe nor mortal arm could bear.
Not so his lance the sable champion sped,
Feign'd at the breast, then brandish'd at the head,
Through his foe's shield the verging weapon press'd,
And raz'd the plume that wanton'd on his crest :
Together, with impetuous onset push'd,
Thus horse to horse, and man to man they rush'd ;
Then backward driv'n, by mutual shoc^k they bound,
Beneath the conflict shakes the suff'ring ground.

So wing'd in war or darkness, on the deep,
Two ships adverse the mediate ocean sweep,

With horrid brunt joins each encount'ring prow,
Loud roars the rifled surge, and foams below ;
Sails, shrowds, and masts all shiver in the toil,
And backward to their sterns the found'ring keels recoil.

But each, well skill'd in ev'ry warlike meed,
New to the charge revives his sinking steed ;
Swift from his side his steely terror drew,
And on his foe with answ'ring fury flew.
The sway long time intemp'rate valour bore,
While artless rage unlearn'd the warrior's lore ;
On their hack'd arms the restless peal descends,
Targe, plate, and mail, and riven corslet, rends :
Struck from their helms, the steely sparks aspire,
And from their swords forth streams the mingling fire.

As in the glow of some Vulcanian shed,
Two brawny smiths heave high the pond'rous sled,
Full front to front, a griesly pair, they stand,
Between their arms extends the fiery brand,
Huge strokes from the tormented anvil bound ;
Thick flames the air, and groans the lab'ring ground.

So toil'd these heroes with commutual rage,
And such reciprocated combat wage :
Around them, trembling, expectation waits,
With speechless horror ev'ry bosom beats ;

For

For either seem'd resistless in the fight,
But each too seem'd to match resistless might.
Surpris'd at length the wary warriors own
A rival to their arms, till then unknown.
With mutual wile defensive, now they fought,
And mutual wounds a mutual caution taught.
All dint of force and stratagem they try,
Reach with their arms, and measure with their eye;
They feint, they ward, strike out, and now evade,
Foin with the point, and parry with the blade;
Probe each defect, some purpos'd limb expose,
Now grappling seize, and with dread union close ;
Their waists with unenamour'd grasp they wind,
Their arms like cramps and forceful engines bind;
Each strives to lift the other from his seat,
Heav'd thick and short, their labouring bosoms beat ;
Struggling they gripe, they pull, they bend, they strain,
But firm and still unsway'd their seats retain ;
Till loos'd, as by consent, again they turn,
And with reviving force and fury burn.
Thus future ages had this fight beheld,
Where both all might excelling, none excell'd,
Had not Rodolphus with impassion'd pride
High heav'd a blow that should at once decide,

(His utmost pow'rs collected in the stroke)
 Like thunder o'er the yielding foe he broke ;
 (The foe elusive of the dire intent)
 His force in air the harrais'd Pagan spent,
 And, by his bulk of cumbrous poise o'erway'd,
 Full on his helm receiv'd the adverse blade ;
 Prone fell the giant o'er a length of ground,
 With ceaseless shouts the echoing heav'ns resound.

As from the brow of some impending steep,
 The sportive diver views the briny deep,
 From his high stand with headlong action flies,
 And turns his heels retorted to the skies ;
 Inverted so the bulky chief o'erturns,
 And heav'n, with heel of quick elation, spurns.
 Light from his steed the conqu'ring hero sprung,
 And threatful o'er the prostrate monster hung ;
 He, with feign'd penitence and humbled breath,
 Fond to evade the fear'd, th' impending death,
 (The instant weapon glitt'ring at his breast)
 The murd'rous scene and nightly guilt confess'd.

Meanwhile, attended by the shouting crew,
 The fair, now freed, to greet her champion flew ;
 For not of mortal arm the chief she thought,
 But heav'n's own delegate with vengeance fraught.

When

When now, enchanting to the warrior's sight,
The maid drew near, the maid as angels bright,
His beaver from his lovely face he rais'd,
And all on Alla, conquering Alla, gaz'd.
Earth, sea, and air, with endless triumph ring,
And shouting thousands hail their victor King.
Not so Constantia ; struck with strange surprise,
Her great deliverer in her judge she eyes,
Conquest and love upon his regal brow,
A cruel judge, but kind deliv'rer now.
Soft shame and trembling awe her step repress'd,
And wondrous gratitude disturb'd her breast ;
Joys, fainting fears, quick thrill'd through ev'ry vein,
And scarce her limbs their beauteous charge sustain.

How widely devious from the ways of man,
Is the great maze of providential plan !
Vain man, short-sighted politician, dreams,
That things shall move subservient to his schemes :
But heav'n the fond projector undermines,
And makes the agent thwart his own designs,
Against itself the instrument employs,
And with the means the end propos'd destroys.
What shall prevent Omnicience to direct ?
And what, what can't Omnipotence effect ?

He to th' event subdues th' opposing cause,
 And light from darkness, wondrous influence, draws,
 Defeat from conquest, infamy from fame,
 And oft to honour paves the path of shame.
 Why then this toil, and coil, and anxious care ?
 Why does man triumph, why does man despair ?
 Why does he choose by vicious steps to scale,
 Where virtue may (at least as well) prevail ?
 Since not in him his proper fortune lies,
 And heav'n alone ordains his fall, or rise ;
 Man may propose, but only heav'n must speed,
 And though the will is free, th' event's decreed.
 Be then the scope of ev'ry act and thought,
 To will and do still simply as we ought ;
 The less shall disappointment's sting annoy,
 And each success will bring a double joy ;
 To boundless pow'r and prescience leave the rest,
 But thou enjoy the province in thy breast.

Lo ! in one hour, by fortune unforeseen,
 The lowly criminal becomes the queen ;
 From shame to glory, anguish to repose,
 From death to life, and bonds to freedom rose.
 In love, as war, resistless, Alla woo'd,
 And whom he won by arms, by suit subdu'd ;

Constantia

Constantia with her secret wish comply'd,
For Alla would not, could not be deny'd.

Nor list we here with pomp of long array
To blazon forth that chaste connubial day,
To tell what numbers numberless, what knights,
And glitt'ring dames adorn'd the festal rites ;
What joys the banquet or the bowl could yield,
Or what the trophies of the tilting field.
Loud were the revels, boundless was the mirth,
That hail'd the sweetest, brightest pair on earth ;
Of men, the wisest, bravest, fairest, he ;
Of all that's beautiful, most beauteous, she :
Love, nature, harmony the union claim'd,
And each for each, and both for one were fram'd.
But we of subsequent adventure treat,
And hasten to unfold their future fate.

Some months young Alla and his peerless bride,
In cordial bond of dear accordance tied,
Had look'd and smil'd the precious hours away,
And fed on bliss that ne'er could know decay :
He whose turn'd ear on that enchanting tongue
With thirst of fondest inclination hung,
Won by a preacher with so fair a face,
Becomes the zealous profelyte of grace,

And

And subjects too their heath'nish rites forego ;
For still from courts, or vice or virtues flow.
But, ah ! too soon, from beauty's softer charms,
War, rig'rous war, and Scotia call to arms ;
Constantia must her blooming hero yield,
And honour sent him to th' embattled field.

Meanwhile, the pregnant fruit of chaste delight
With a male infant crown'd the nuptial rite ;
All sweet and lovely as the smiling morn,
Mauritius was to bleſs a nation born ;
Their pledge of future bliss, their princely boy,
The Britons hail with universal joy ;
Their fancy frames him what their pray'rs require,
Sweet as their queen, and valiant as his fire.
Offa, to whom the king's departing care
(Inestimable charge) consign'd the fair,
Advice of loyal gratulation sent,
To glad his fov'reign with the bleſt event.

But Donnegilda, cruel, crafty dame,
Great Alla's mother, over-fond of fame,
She (as all antique parents, wondrous sage !
For youth project th' inappetence of age,
Each sense endearing and humane despise,
And on the Mammon feast their downcast eyes)

Malevolent

Malevolent beheld a stranger led,
Unknown, unfriended, to the regal bed:
For in the secret closet of her breast,
Constantia her imperial birth suppress'd,
Till heav'n should perfect the connubial band,
And with her royal offspring bles the land.
Ah ! ill-tim'd caution ! were this truth declar'd,
What a vast cost of future woe was spar'd !
But where heav'n's will th' unequal cause supplies,
To set the world on fire a spark may well suffice.

The subtle dame, who now th' occasion spy'd,
To tear Constantia from her Alla's side,
Debauch'd the messenger, his mandate stole,
And forg'd in Offa's name the crafty scroll ;
Wherein she fram'd a tale with wondrous art,
How the feign'd fair by witchcraft won his heart ;
Seduc'd his fenses with infernal lore,
And a dread monster (hideous offspring) bore.
But Alla, of whose fond, whose faithful breast,
His consort was the dear eternal guest,
Unmov'd, return'd his bliss was too refin'd,
Without the just allay that heav'n affign'd ;
And what Constantia bore, or heav'n decreed,
To be unwelcome, must be strange indeed.

This

This letter too the courier, as before,
To Britain's dowager unweeting bore,
And in the surfeit of oblivious wine
Left her to perpetrate the black design.
This too she cancel'd, forg'd the regal hand,
And pitiless inscrib'd the dire command,
With threats that Offa to the wonted sea
Should the false queen and hated imp convey ;
And there permit the now detested dame
To seek the shore from whence the forcereis came.

When Offa had the barb'rous mandate read,
To heav'n his eyes and lifted hands he spread,
Like Niobe to marble turn'd he stood ;
Grief, fear, and horror froze the gen'rous blood:
Again he stir'd, as from some wistful dream,
Again he read, alas ! he read the same.

But (though in terms of soothing phrase express'd)
When now Constantia learn'd her lord's behest,
Keen anguish, piercing to the springs of life,
At once arrests the mother and the wife :
For not to her alone confin'd, as late,
When bold she stood the weightiest stroke of fate ;
A thousand cares of soft endearing kind
Now share with heav'n the motions of her mind,

And

And with fond thoughts of sweet concern divide,
The melting mother and the clasping bride ;
And these alone her bursting bosom rend,
And o'er the couch her lifeless limbs extend.

Fame pour'd the mourning populace-around,
In gushing anguish ev'ry eye is drown'd ;
Compassion set her virtues full to view,
And with their queen bid ev'ry joy adieu :
Swift from his throne they wish their Alla hurl'd,
And her, crown'd empress of the peopled world.
But, ah ! in vain their pray'rs and tears delay ;
Strict was the charge, and Offa must obey :
With heavy heart and faint reluctant hand,
He led the mourner to the neighb'ring strand :
She to the heaving whiteness of her breast,
With melting looks, her helpless infant prest ;
And thus, while sobs her piteous accent broke,
Her little inattentive child bespoke.

“ Weep not, sweet wretch ! though such thy father's
will,
“ Yet hast thou one, one hapless parent still.
“ Peace, peace ; to thee thy mother means no harm,
“ Nor let our lot thy little heart alarm :

“ O'er

“ O'er thee till death, o'er thee, my cares shall wake,
“ And love thee for thy cruel father's sake.”

Had ev'ry fire (as on the banks of Nile)
Lost his first-born throughout Britannia's isle,
Or death with undistinguish'd carnage swept
Wives, sons, and fires, by all the living wept;
Such haply were the woes that now deplore
Their queen, attended to the echoing shore:
They tear their locks, their rueful bosoms smite,
And trace her bark with long pursuing sight.

Tedious it were, though wondrous strange to tell,
What new adventures o'er the main befel,
How fondly Prattling, while her infant smil'd,
She the long hours and wint'ry nights beguil'd;
Till, seiz'd by pirates on th' Atlantic wave,
A prince of Gallia bought th' imperial slave:
How in calm peace, and friendship long retain'd,
High trust and grace her winning sweetness gain'd,
Till she to Rome (predestinate event)
Associate with her lord and mistress went.

But now to Britain let the muse repair,
For there the valiant Alla claims her care.

Triumphant soon from Scotia he return'd,
And to behold his lov'd Constantia burn'd:

This

This wings his feet along the toilsome way ;
But thoughts are swifter, swifter far than they ;
Hope, elevate, the distant journey meets ;
And to his march his heart the measure beats. *

But when o'er Tweed he led his conqu'ring host,
And trod the verdure of Northumbria's coast,
While laurels round their trophied temples twin'd,
And banners wanton'd in the curling wind,
No wonted crowds their once-lov'd Alla meet,
No prostrate knees, or hailing voices greet ;
Blank was his passage o'er the pensive ground,
And silence cast a mournful gloom around ;
Or if his prince some straggling peasant spy'd,
As from a basilisk he flunk aside.

What this might mean revolv'd within his breast,
Conjecture dire, and whisp'ring doubts suggest,
More dread than death, some hideous ill impart,
(This the first fear ere seiz'd on Alla's heart)
But worse, O worse than fancy yet could fear,
When now the killing truth arrests his ear,
Athwart his eyes and mantling round his soul,
Thick clouds of grief and inky darkness roll,
His sense nor tears nor utt'ring groans could tell,
But froze and lock'd in speechless woe he fell.

At length by care, by cruel kindness, brought
To all the anguish of returning thought,
Swift from the sheath he drew the deadly guest,
And would have pierc'd this vulture in his breast ;
Such was the sting of agonizing pain,
His frenzy would th' immortal soul have slain.
But this prevented, round th' attending crew,
With baleful glance, his eager eyes he threw ;
Constantia he requires with frantic tongue,
Constantia still the restless accents fung ;
To her, as present, now his fondness speaks,
As absent, into desp'rare action breaks :
“ Oh never, never more, my queen ! he cries,
“ Shall that known form attract these dying eyes ;
“ Never !—O, 'tis the worst, the last despair ;
“ Never is long, is wondrous long to bear.
“ Down, down, ye cloud-topt hills, your summits stoop,
“ With me, in sign of endless mourning droop :
“ Snapt be the spear, bright armour ground to dust,
“ Repose thou corselet in eternal rust ;
“ Still'd be each tube, the trumpet's warlike swell,
“ Empire, and fame, all, all with thee farewell :
“ For thee alone thy conqu'ring soldier arm'd,
“ The banner wav'd, and sprightly clangor charm'd ;
“ But

“ But arms and loath'd desire with thee are dead,

“ And joy, no, never to return, is fled.”

Thus rav'd the youth, to wilful woes resign'd,
And offer'd aid was sickness to his mind.

To frenzy by uxorious transports rais'd,
His vengeance on his aged parent seiz'd;
Who, doom'd to lose that too designing head,
A victim to his lov'd Constantia bled.

But violence in nature cannot last :
What region's known to bear eternal blast ?
Time changes all, dissolves the melting rock,
And on fix'd water turns the crystal lock.
Time—^{er} his anguish shed a silent balm,
A peace unsmiling, and a gloomy calm ;
By ill untaught to mourn, by joy to glow,
And still insensible to bliss or woe.

To him, thus careless of the circling year,
Five annual suns had roll'd their bright career ;
To heav'n alone his earthly ardors turn'd,
There, late to meet the dear Constantia, burn'd.
Still that fond hope remain'd—his sole desire,
And gave new wings to the celestial fire.
But yet, hereafter, what might there betide
The blood-stain'd hand, by whom a parent died—

This, this gave doubtful thought, unhing'd his rest,
And shook the region of his contrite breast :
At length taught satiate vengeance to relent,
And ship'd for Rome, the royal pilgrim sent.

O'er Tiber soon the far-fraught tidings sped,
(For far beyond the warrior's fame had spread)
And Gallia's Hugo, to whose gen'rous care
Protecting heav'n consign'd the wand'ring fair,
With those, whom virtuous approbation fir'd,
As still the brave are by the brave admir'd,
To see, to touch the gallant Alla glow'd,
And rank'd to meet the regal pilgrim rode.
With all due rite, and answ'ring grace human,
The courteous prince receiv'd the shining train ;
But Hugo chief, with port of winning view,
The hero's eye and prime affection drew ;
And him (with notes selected from the rest)
The prince solicits for a frequent guest.

But, ah ! when now it reach'd Constantia's ear,
That Alla, lovely, barb'rous man, was near,
Her soul a thousand diff'rent thoughts assail ;
Expell'd by turns, by turns they all prevail ;
With melting joy and burning love she glows,
With cooling grief and icy hate she froze :

Dear

Dear to her heart, though horrid to her will,
He was the lov'd, the charming Alla still.
Nor Hugo now (in pompous dress array'd)
To wait Britannia's potent lord delay'd ;
With him Mauritius frequent chat supply'd,
A little gay companion at his side ;
He beams a Ganymede, in whose sweet face
The fire and mother liv'd with mingling grace.
Here still they met, in beauty reconcil'd ;
Here still in soft delicious union smil'd ;
So join'd, so blended, with divinest art,
As left it not in any pow'r to part.

Upon the pratler's aspect, with surprise,
And charm'd attention, Alla fix'd his eyes ;
Somewhat of wanted semblance there he spy'd,
Dear to his sense, and to his heart ally'd ;
Somewhat that touch'd beyond all mortal view,
And inly with the link of nature drew.
Disturb'd he rose ; upon his secret soul
Unweeting thaw and cordial yearnings stole ;
Big with the soft distress, aside he stept,
And much the warrior wonder'd why he wept.
Compos'd, he clasp'd the infant to his breast,
And ask'd, what fire with such a son was blest ?

“ That (Hugo cry’d) his dame alone must show ;
 “ Sire hath he none, or none of whom we know ;
 “ But mother, sure, he hath, that’s such a mate,
 “ No man can boast, nor boastful tongue relate ;
 “ Though fancy, to give semblance of her face,
 “ From all her sex should call each sep’rate grace,
 “ To speak her soul should rob from ev’ry saint,
 “ Low yet were phrase, and all description faint.”

Thus while his tongue with free encomium flow’d,
 With strange emotion Alla’s aspect glow’d ;
 Full on his heart the dear idea rush’d,
 His cheek with hope and lively ardour flush’d ;
 When strait despondence sick’ning in his soul,
 From its known seat the rosy tincture stole :
 “ Once, once he cry’d (the lab’ring sigh suppres’d)
 “ Such treasure once these widow’d arms posses’d :
 “ Nature is rich, yet gladly should I know,
 “ If the world’s round can such another shew.”
 “ Be that (reply’d the Gallic chief) confess’d,
 “ Whene’er my house boasts Alla for a guest.”

They went—but when the long disfever’d pair,
 Her Alla here, and his Constantia there—
 By doubts, loves, fears, and rushing joys dismay’d,
 Unmov’d, each face with mutual gaze survey’d ;

Such

Such was the scene, th' impassion'd gesture such,
 As phrase can't reach, nor liveliest pencil touch.
 Three times the fair one sought the shades of death,
 Three times reviv'd by Alla's balmy breath ;
 And thrice his guiltless plea he would essay,
 And thrice she turn'd, Constantia turn'd away.
 " Now, by this hand (Britannia's hero cry'd)
 " This hand, by whom a cruel parent dy'd,
 " Long since for thee, for thee, thou dear one, bled,
 " A victim sacred to that injur'd head,
 " Of all thy wrongs thy Alla is as clear,
 " As here my son, thy other Alla here :
 " Ah ! could you know the anguish, the distress,
 " (But who can know what words can ne'er express ?)
 " What racks, what deaths, thy tort'ring absence cost,
 " What restless toil this suff'ring bosom toss'd,
 " 'Twas such a ruin, such a breach of care,
 " As this; and only this could e'er repair."

So saying, swift resistless to his breast
 The yielding fair repeated transport press'd :
 But when all doubt and cold suspicion clear'd,
 Her lord still faithful as belov'd appear'd ;
 By her so oft, so cruelly accus'd,
 Still kind and true, and as herself abus'd ;

She in his bosom all with joy o'erpow'r'd,
 Of sobs and tears the copious tempest show'r'd ;
 All eyes around the melting measure kept,
 And pleasure through contagious transport wept.
 For heav'n alone can emulate the sweet
 Of one hour's bliss, when two such lovers meet.

Still had Constantia, lock'd within her breast,
 The royal secret of her birth suppress'd,
 When Rome's imperial monarch wide invites
 To social cheer and festival delights :
 For now triumphant from the Syrian coast,
 Though long detain'd, return'd his vengeful host ;
 And, to reward their toils and drown their cares,
 The monarch on a solemn day prepares.
 With festal robes adorn'd each warrior came ;
 In glitt'ring vesture many a Roman dame ;
 And there amid the peers, a peerless guest,
 There Alla came, in regal splendours dress'd ;
 All India beaming at the hero's side,
 O'er beaming India shone his brighter bride ;
 While the young joy of each applauding tongue,
 Mauritius, on his smiling parents hung,
 As though a stripling cherub should attend,
 Where two of prime angelic rank descend.

Struck

Struck at the pleasing prospect, all admire ;
But mute with wonder stood th' imperial fire ;
For haply, since our primal parents fell,
Ne'er met a pair that could this pair excel.

He at his left Britannia's monarch plac'd,
And his right hand th' unknown Constantia grac'd :
When with a starting tear the rev'rend man
(To Alla turn'd) in placid speech began :
“ Young though thou art, with earliest vigour strung,
“ And the fond theme of fame's applauding tongue,
“ 'Tis said thou hast the stings of fortune felt ;
“ And such can learn from others' woes to melt.
“ I had a daughter, once my only care,
“ As virtuous as thy confort, and as fair :
“ But her (sad cause of folly to repent)
“ To Syria with a numerous train I sent ;
“ And there the toil, the treach'rous toil was spread,
“ And there Constantia, there my child, you bled !
“ Around the maid her brave attendants fell,
“ Nor one was left the fatal tale to tell.
“ Hence age through grief has doubly known decay,
“ And care untimely turn'd my locks to grey.
“ This day selected from the circling year,
“ To her I consecrate the annual tear ;

“ And

“ And these the chiefs, who, in her quarrel crown’d,
“ Have late in vengeance bath’d the hostile ground.
“ But vain is vengeance where all hope is fled,
“ Nor hosts of victims can revive the dead :
“ My child ! thou’st robb’d my life of all delight,
“ But death shall soon our happier souls unite.”
Nor yet he ended, when, with troubled mien,
Quick at his knees low bow’d Britannia’s queen;
“ Not so, not so, my father, loud she cry’d ;
“ See here thy child, thy daughter at thy side.
“ Why look you thus with wild and piercing eye ?
“ Your daughter here, your daughter you descrie :
“ Constantia, who through many a death survives,
“ And yet to see her king and sire arrives.”
“ Yes, yes, you are my child, these accents tell—”
He could no more, but on her neck he fell,
Down her soft cheek his mingling tears o’erflow,
Joy, joy too great, assum’d the form of woe ;
The roof surprise and echoing transport tore,
And eyes then wept, that never wept before.
Wing’d as an arrow from some vig’rous arm,
Through Rome’s wide city flew the glad alarm :
Constantia’s here—she lives—she lives, they cry’d,
Constantia, now the British hero’s bride : ”

Around

Around the palace pour'd in wild delight,
On thousands gath'ring thousands strait unite ;
With ceaseless clamours, and extended hands,
Constantia's presence ev'ry voice demands ;
Constantia, Alla, and their lovely boy,
They claim, the blooming pledge of future joy.
Forth strait they come, conspicuous to the view,
And greet with graceful mien th' applauding crew ;
In shouts to heav'n their exultations fly,
And universal joy torments the sky.

PROLOGUE

TO THE

WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

BEHOLD * the woes of matrimonial life,
And hear with rev'rence an experienc'd Wife :
To dear-bought wisdom give the credit due,
And think for once a woman tells you true.
In all these trials I have borne a part,
I was myself the scourge that caus'd the smart :
For since fifteen in triumph have I led
Five captive husbands from the church to bed.

Christ saw a wedding once, the Scripture says,
And saw but one, 'tis thought, in all his days :
Whence some infer, whose conscience is too nice,
No pious Christian ought to marry twice.
But let them read, and solve me if they can,
The words address'd to the Samaritan :
Five times in lawful wedlock she was join'd ;
And sure the certain stint was ne'er defin'd.

* The Wife of Bath speaks.

“ Increase

“ Increase and multiply,” was heav’n’s command,
And that’s a text I clearly understand.
This too, “ Let men their fires and mothers leave,
“ And to their dearer wives for ever cleave.”
More wives than one by Solomon were try’d,
Or else the wisest of mankind’s bely’d.
I’ve had myself full many a merry fit ;
And trust in heav’n I may have many yet.
For when my transitory spouse, unkind,
Shall die, and leave his woeful wife behind,
I’ll take the next good Christian I can find. }
I’ll take the next good Christian I can find.

Paul, knowing one could never serve our turn,
Declar’d, ‘twas better far to wed than burn.
There’s danger in assembling fire and tow ;
I grant ’em that ; and what it means, you know.
The same Apostle too has elsewhere own’d,
No precept for virginity he found :
’Tis but a counsel ; and we women still
Take which we like, the counsel, or our will.

I envy not their bliss, if he or she
Think fit to live in perfect chastity ;
Pure let them be, and free from taint of vice ;
I, for a few slight spots, am not so nice.

Heav’n

Heav'n calls us different ways ; on these bestows
One proper gift, another grants to those :
Not ev'ry man's oblig'd to sell his store,
And give up all his substance to the poor :
Such as are perfect may, I can't deny ;
But, by your leave, divines, so am not I.

Full many a saint, since first the world began,
Liv'd an unspotted maid, in spite of man :
Let such, a God's name, with fine wheat be fed,
And let us honest wives eat barley bread.
For me, I'll keep the post assign'd by heav'n,
And use the copious talent it has giv'n :
Let my good spouse pay tribute, do me right,
And keep an equal reck'ning ev'ry night ;
His proper body is not his, but mine ;
For so said Paul, and Paul's a found divine.

Know then, of those five husbands I have had,
Three were just tolerable, two were bad.
The three were old, but rich and fond beside,
And toil'd most piteously to please their bride.
But since their wealth, the best they had, was mine,
The rest, without much loss, I could resign.
Sure to be lov'd, I took no pains to please,
Yet had more pleasure far than they had ease.

Presents

Presents flow'd in apace ; with shew'rs of gold,
They made their court, like Jupiter of old.
If I but smil'd, a sudden youth they found,
And a new palsey seiz'd them when I frown'd.

Ye sov'reign wives, give ear, and understand ;
Thus shall ye speak, and exercise command :
For never was it giv'n to mortal man,
To lie so boldly as a woman can :
Forswear the fact, though seen with both his eyes,
And call her maids to witness how he lies.

‘ Hark, old Sir Paul ! (’twas thus I us’d to say)
‘ Whence is our neighbour’s wife so rich and gay ?
‘ Treated, caref’sd, where’er she’s pleas’d to roam ?
‘ I sit in tatters, and immur’d at home.
‘ Why to her house dost thou so oft repair ?
‘ Art though so am’rous ? and is she so fair ?
‘ If I but see a cousin, or a friend,
‘ Lord ! how you swell, and rage like any fiend !
‘ But you reel home, a drunken beastly bear,
‘ Then preach till midnight in your easy chair ;
‘ Cry, wives are false, and ev’ry woman evil,
‘ And give up all that’s female to the devil.
‘ If poor, you say, she drains her husband’s purse ;
‘ If rich, she keeps her priest, or something worse ;

‘ If

- ‘ If highly born, intolerably vain,
- ‘ Vapours and pride by turns possess her brain ;
- ‘ Now gayly mad, now sourly splenetick,
- ‘ Freakish when well, and fretful when she’s sick.
- ‘ If fair, then chaste she cannot long abide,
- ‘ By pressing youth attack’d on ev’ry side.
- ‘ If foul, her wealth the lusty lover lures,
- ‘ Or else her wit some fool-gallant procures ;
- ‘ Or else she dances with becoming grace,
- ‘ Or shape excuses the defects of face.
- ‘ There swims no goose so grey, but, soon or late,
- ‘ She finds some honest gander for her mate.
- ‘ Horses, thou say’st, and asses, men may try,
- ‘ And ring suspected vessels ere they buy :
- ‘ But wives, a random choice, untry’d they take ;
- ‘ They dream in courtship, but in wedlock wake :
- ‘ Then, nor till then, the veil’s remov’d away,
- ‘ And all the woman glares in open day.
- ‘ You tell me, to preserve your wife’s good grace,
- ‘ Your eyes must always languish on my face ;
- ‘ Your tongue with constant flatt’ries feed my ear,
- ‘ And tag each sentence with, My life ! my dear !
- ‘ If, by strange chance, a modest blush be rais’d,
- ‘ Be sure my fine complexion must be prais’d.

‘ My

‘ My garments always must be new and gay,
 ‘ And feasts still kept upon my wedding-day.
 ‘ Then must my nurse be pleas’d, and fav’rite maid ;
 ‘ And endless treats, and endless visits paid
 ‘ To a long train of kindred, friends, allies ;
 ‘ All this thou say’st, and all thou say’st are lies.
 ‘ On Jenkin too you cast a squinting eye :
 ‘ What ! can your ’prentice raise your jealousy ?
 ‘ Fresh are his ruddy cheeks, his forehead fair,
 ‘ And like the burnish’d gold his curling hair.
 ‘ But clear thy wrinkled brow, and quit thy sorrow,
 ‘ I’d scorn your ’prentice, should you die to-morrow.
 ‘ Why are thy chefts all lock’d ? on what design ?
 ‘ Are not thy worldly goods and treasure mine ?
 ‘ Sir, I’m no fool ; nor shall you, by St. John,
 ‘ Have goods and body to yourself alone ;
 ‘ One you shall quit, in spite of both your eyes—
 ‘ I heed not, I, the bolts, the locks, the spies.
 ‘ If you had wit, you’d say, “ Go where you will,
 ‘ Dear spouse ; I credit not the tales they tell :
 ‘ Take all the freedoms of a married life ;
 ‘ I know thee for a virtuous, faithful wife.”
 ‘ Lord ! when you have enough, what need you care
 ‘ How merrily soever others fare ?

‘ Though all the day I give and take delight,
‘ Doubt not, sufficient will be left at night ;
‘ ‘Tis but a just and rational desire,
‘ To light a taper at a neighbour’s fire.
 ‘ There’s danger too, you think, in rich array,
‘ And none can long be modest that are gay :
‘ The cat, if you but singe her tabby skin,
‘ The chimney keeps, and fits content within ;
‘ But once grown sleek, will from her corner run,
‘ Sport with her tail, and wanton in the sun :
‘ She licks her fair round face, and frisks abroad,
‘ To show her furr, and to be catterwaw’d.’

Lo ! thus, my friends, I wrought to my defires
These three right-ancient venerable fires.
I told ‘em, thus you say, and thus you do ;
And told ‘em false ; but Jenkin sware ‘twas true.
I, like a dog, could bite as well as whine,
And first complain’d, whene’er the guilt was mine.
I tax’d them oft with wenching and amours,
When their weak legs scarce dragg’d ‘em out of doors ;
And sware, the rambles that I took by night,
Were all to spy what damfels they bedight.
That colour brought me many hours of mirth ;
For all this wit is giv’n us from our birth.

Heav’n

Heav'n gave to woman the peculiar grace,
To spin, to weep, and cully human race.
By this nice conduct, and this prudent course,
By murmur'ring, wheedling, stratagem, and force,
I still prevail'd, and would be in the right,
Or curtain-lectures made a restless night.
If once my husband's arm was o'er my side,
What ! so familiar with your spouse ? I cry'd :
I levy'd first a tax upon his need ;
Then let him---'twas a nicety indeed !
Let all mankind this certain maxim hold,
Marry who will, our sex is to be sold.
With empty hands no tassels can you lure ;
But fulsome love for gain we can endure :
For gold we love the impotent and old,
And heave, and pant, and kiss, and cling for gold.
Yet with embraces, curses oft I mix'd ;
Then kiss'd again, and chid and rail'd betwixt.
Well, I may make my will in peace, and die ;
For not one word in man's arrears am I.
To drop a dear dispute I was unable,
Ev'n though the pope himself had sat at table.
But when my point was gain'd, then thus I spoke ;
" Billy, my dear, how sheepishly you look !

“ Approach, my spouse, and let me kiss thy cheek ;
“ Thou should’st be always thus, resign’d and meek :
“ Of Job’s great patience since so oft you preach,
“ Well should you practise, who so well can teach.
“ ’Tis difficult to do, I must allow ;
“ But I, my dearest, will instruct you how.
“ Great is the blessing of a prudent wife,
“ Who puts a period to domestic strife.
“ One of us two must rule, and one obey ;
“ And since in man right reason bears the sway, }
“ Let that frail thing, weak woman, have her way. }
“ The wives of all my family have rul’d
“ Their tender husbands, and their passions cool’d.
“ Fye ! ’tis unmanly thus to sigh and groan ;
“ What ! would you have me to yourself alone ?
“ Why, take me, love ! take all and ev’ry part !
“ Here’s your revenge ! you love it at your heart.
“ Would I vouchsafe to tell what nature gave,
“ You little think what custom I could have.
“ But see ! I’m all your own—nay, hold—for shame !
“ What means my dear—indeed—you are to blame.”
 Thus with my first three lords I pass’d my life,
 A very woman, and a very wife.

What

What sums from these old spouses I could raise,
Procur'd young husbands in my riper days.
Though past my bloom, not yet decay'd was I,
Wanton and wild, and chatter'd like a pye.
In country-dances still I bore the bell,
And sung as sweet as Evening-Philomel.
To clear my quail-pipe, and refresh my soul,
Full oft I drain'd the spicy nut-brown bowl ;
Rich luscious wines, that youthful blood improve,
And warm the swelling veins to feasts of love :
For 'tis as sure, as cold engenders hail,
A liqu'rish mouth must have a lech'rous tail.
Wine lets no lover unrewarded go,
As all true gamesters by experience know.

But oh, good gods ! whene'er a thought I cast
On all the joys of youth and beauty past,
To find in pleasures I have had my part,
Still warms me to the bottom of my heart.
This wicked world was once my dear delight ;
Now all my conquests, all my charms, good night !
The flour consum'd, the best that now I can,
Is e'en to make my market of the bran.

My fourth dear spouse was not exceeding true :
He kept, 'twas thought, a private miss, or two :

But all that score I paid — as how? you'll say;
Not with my body, in a filthy way:
But I so dres'd, and danc'd, and drank, and din'd;
And view'd a friend, with eyes so very kind,
As stung his heart, and made his marrow fry
With burning rage and frantick jealousy.
His soul, I hope, enjoys eternal glory;
For here on earth I was his purgatory.
Oft, when his shoe the most severely wrung,
He put on careles air, and sat and sung.
How sore I gall'd him, only heav'n could know,
And he that felt, and I that caus'd the woe.
He dy'd, when last from pilgrimage I came,
With other goffips from Jerusalem;
And now lies buried underneath a rood,
Fair to be seen, and rear'd of honest wood:
A tomb, indeed, with fewer sculptures grac'd,
Than that Mausolus' pious widow plac'd;
Or where inshrin'd the great Darius lay;
But cost on graves is merely thrown away.
The pit fill'd up, with turf we cover'd o'er;
So, bless the good man's soul; I say no more.
Now for my fifth lov'd lord, the last and best;
(Kind heav'n afford him everlasting rest)

Full

Full hearty was his love ; and I can shew
The tokens on my ribs in black and blue :
Yet, with a knack, my heart he could have won,
While yet the smart was shooting in the bone.
How quaint an appetite in women reigns !
Free gifts we scorn, and love what costs us pains :
Let men avoid us, and on them we leap ;
A glutt'd market makes provision cheap.

In pure good will I took this jovial spark ;
Of Oxford he, a most egregious clerk.
He boarded with a widow in the town,
A trusty gossip, one dame Alison.
Full well the secrets of my soul she knew,
Better than e'er our parish-priest could do.
To her I told whatever could befall ;
Had but my husband piſ'd against a wall,
Or done a thing that might have cost his life,
She—and my niece—and one more worthy wife,
Had known it all : what most he would conceal,
To these I made no scruple to reveal.
Oft has he blush'd from ear to ear for shame,
That e'er he told a secret to his dame.
It so befel, in holy time of Lent,
That oft a day I to this gossip went ;

(My husband, thank my stars, was out of town)
 From house to house we rambled up and down,
 This clerk, myself, and my good neighbour Alse,
 To see, be seen, to tell, and gather tales.

Visits to ev'ry church we daily paid,
 And march'd in ev'ry holy masquerade ;
 The stations duly, and the vigils kept ;
 Not much we fasted, but scarce ever slept.
 At sermons too I shone in scarlet gay ;
 The wasting moth ne'er spoil'd my best array ;
 The cause was this, I wore it ev'ry day.

'Twas when fresh May her early blossoms yields,
 This clerk and I were walking in the fields.

We grew so intimate, I can't tell how,
 I pawn'd my hontour, and engag'd my vow,
 If e'er I laid my husband in his urn,

That he, and only he, should serve my turn.

We strait struck hands, the bargain was agreed ;
 I still have shifts against a time of need :

The mouse that always trufts to one poor hole,
 Can never be a mouse of any soul.

I vow'd, I scarce could sleep since first I knew him,
 And durst be sworn he had bewitch'd me to him ;

If

If e'er I slept, I dream'd of him alone,
And dreams foretel, as learned men have shown : }
All this I said ; but dreams, sirs, I had none : }
I follow'd but my crafty crony's lore,
Who bid me tell this lie—and twenty more.

Thus day by day, and month by month we past ;
It pleas'd the Lord to take my spouse at last.
I tore my gown, I soil'd my locks with dust,
And beat my breasts, as wretched widows—must.
Before my face my handkerchief I spread,
To hide the flood of tears I did—not shed.
The good man's coffin to the church was borne ;
Around, the neighbours, and my clerk too mourn.
But, as he march'd, good gods ! he shew'd a pair
Of legs and feet, so clean, so strong, so fair !
Of twenty winters age he seem'd to be ;
I (to say truth) was twenty more than he :
But vig'rous still, a lively buxom dame,
And had a wondrous gift to quench a flame.
A conj'rer once, that deeply could divine,
Affur'd me, Mars in Taurus was my sign.
As the stars order'd, such my life has been :
Alas, alas, that ever love was sin !

Fair

Fair Venus gave me fire, and sprightly grace,
And Mars assurance, and a dauntless face.
By virtue of this pow'rful constellation,
I follow'd always my own inclination.

But to my tale: A month scarce pass'd away,
With dance and song we kept the nuptial day.
All I possess'd, I gave to his command,
My goods and chattels, money, house and land :
But oft repented, and repent it still ;
He prov'd a rebel to my sov'reign will :
Nay once, by heav'n, he struck me on the face ;
Hear but the fact, and judge yourself the case.

Stubborn as any lioness was I ;
And knew full well to raise my voice on high ;
As true a rambler as I was before,
And would be so, in spite of all he swore.
He against this right sagely would advise,
And old examples set before my eyes ;
Tell how the Roman matrons led their life,
Of Gracchus' mother, and Duilius' wife ;
And chose the sermon, as besein'd his wit,
With some grave sentence out of holy writ.
Oft would he say, " Who builds his house on sands,
" Pricks his blind horse across the fallow lands ;

" Or

“ Or lets his wife abroad with pilgrims roam,
“ Deserves a fool’s cap and long ears at home.”
All this avail’d not: For whoe’er he be
That tells my faults, I hate him mortally:
And so do numbers more, I’ll boldly say,
Men, women, clergy, regular and lay.

My spouse (who was, you know, to learning bred)
A certain treatise oft at evening read;
Where divers authors (whom the devil confound
For all their lies) were in one volume bound.
Valerius, whole; and of St. Jerome, part;
Chrysippus and Tertullian, Ovid’s Art,
Solomon’s Proverbs, Eloisa’s loves;
And many more than sure the church approves.
More legends were there here of wicked wives,
Than good, in all the Bible and saints’ lives.
Who drew the lion vanquish’d? ’Twas a man.
But could we women write as scholars can,
Men should stand mark’d with far more wickedness,
Than all the sons of Adam could redress.
Love seldom haunts the breast where learning lies,
And Venus sets ere Mercury can rise.
Those play the scholars who can’t play the men,
And use that weapon which they have, their pen;

When

When old, and past the relish of delight,
Then down they sit, and in their dotage write,
That not one woman keeps her marriage vow.
(This by the way, but to my purpose now.)

It chanc'd, my husband, on a winter's night,
Read in this book aloud, with strange delight,
How the first female (as the Scriptures show)
Brought her own spouse and all his race to woe ;
How Sampson fell ; and he whom Dejanire
Wrapp'd in th' invenom'd shirt, and set on fire ;
How curs'd Eryphile her lord betray'd,
And the dire ambush Clytemnestra laid.
But what most pleas'd him, was the Cretan dame,
And husband-bull—oh monstrous ! fie, for shame !

He had by heart the whole detail of woe
Xantippe made her good man undergo.
How oft she scolded in a day, he knew,
How many piss-pots on the sage she threw ;
Who took it patiently, and wip'd his head ;
“ Rain follows thunder,” that was all he said.

He read, how Arius to his friend complain'd,
A fatal tree was growing in his land,
On which three wives successively had twin'd
A sliding noose, and waver'd in the wind.

“ Where

“ Where grows this plant (reply'd the friend) oh where ?
“ For better fruit did never orchard bear :
“ Give me some slip of this most blissful tree,
“ And in my garden planted shall it be.”

Then how two wives their lords' destruction prove,
Through hatred one, and one through too much love ;
That for her husband mix'd a pois'rous draught,
And this, for lust an am'rous philtre brought ;
The nimble juice soon seiz'd his giddy head,
Frantick at night, and in the morning dead.

How some with swords their sleeping lords have slain,
And some have hammer'd nails into their brain ;
And some have drench'd them with a deadly potion ;
All this he read, and read with great devotion.

Long time I heard, and swell'd, and blush'd, and
frown'd ;
But when no end of these vile tales I found,
When still he read, and laugh'd, and read again,
And half the night was thus consum'd in vain ;
Provok'd to vengeance, three large leaves I tore,
And with one buffet fell'd him on the floor.
With that my husband in a fury rose,
And down he settled me with hearty blows.
I groan'd, and lay extended on my side ;
‘ Oh ! thou hast slain me for my wealth (I cry'd) :
‘ Yet

‘ Yet I forgive thee—take my last embrace—’
 He wept, kind soul ! and stoop’d to kiss my face ;
 I took him such a box as turn’d him blue,
 Then sigh’d, and cry’d, ‘ Adieu, my dear, adieu !’

But after many a hearty struggle past,
 I condescended to be pleas’d at last.
 Soon as he said, “ My mistress and my wife,
 “ Do what you list, the term of all your life ;”
 I took to heart the merits of the cause,
 And stood content to rule by wholesome laws ;
 Receiv’d the reins of absolute command,
 With all the government of house and land,
 And empire o’er his tongue, and o’er his hand. }
 As for the volume that revil’d the dames,
 ’Twas torn to fragments, and condemn’d to flames.

Now heav’n on all my husbands gone bestow
 Pleasures above, for tortures felt below :
 That rest, they wish’d for, grant them in the grave,
 And bless those souls my conduct help’d to save.

* The point thus settled, from objection clear,
 Now will I tell my tale, if you will hear.

* Continued by Mr. *Ogle*.

Here,

Here, interrupting, laugh'd the rosy Fryar ;
 " So may my soul to heav'nly bliss aspire,
 " Nor yet of earthly good my body fail,
 " As 'twas a long preamble of a tale."
 He said, and chuckled at his speech so smart.
 This heard the Sumner, nettled to the heart,
 Mad to observe his brother leech in glee ;
 For rarely two of any trade agree.
 " Now, by the arms that hung our souls to save,
 " A Fryar is still an intermeddling knave :
 " For, like a fly, he falls in ev'ry dish,
 " Be it or roast, or boil'd, or fowl, or fish :
 " Why stop the lady in her pleasant gambol ?
 " And what to thee the length of her preamble ?
 " Keep on the right, or left, behind, before,
 " Peace, son of a mendicant ! Peace, son of a whore !"
 " So ! (quoth the Fryar) sir Sumner, say'st thou so ?
 " Faith, we will state accounts ere ~~far~~ we go.
 " I of a Sumner will a Tale provide,
 " And ev'ry hand shall shake at ev'ry side."
 The Sumner answer'd, " I beshrew thy face.
 " Of many a Fryar can I recount the case ;
 " And one shall pay thy malice in return,
 " Ere yet we reach the town of Sittingbourne."

" Hold,

112 PROLOGUE TO THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

“ Hold, cry'd our lordly Host, you spoil our sport ;
“ Silence, I say ; keep silence in the court !
“ Will you not let the woman tell her tale ?
“ Wrangling, like goffips, drunk with market-ale !
“ Come, gentle dame, our play is at a stand.”—
“ All ready, Sir, quoth she, at your command.
“ I'll do the best to please you that I can,
“ If I have licence from this worthy man.’
“ ’Tis granted, said the Fryar, with holy leer,
“ And open'd to the tale a self-sufficient ear.”

THE
DESIRE OF WOMAN:
OR, THE
WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

IN days of old, when Arthur fill'd the throne,
Whose acts and fame to foreign lands were blown ;
The little elfs and little fairy queen
Gambol'd on heaths, and danc'd along the green ;
And where the jolly troop had led the round,
The grafs untrodden rose, and mark'd the ground :
Nor darkling did they glance, the silver light
Of Phœbe serv'd to guide their steps aright, }
And, with their tripping pleas'd, prolong the night.
Her beams they follow'd, where at full they play'd,
Nor longer than she shed her horns they stay'd : }
From thence with airy flight to foreign lands con-
vey'd. }
Above the rest, our Britain held they dear,
More solemnly they kept their sabbaths here, }
And made more spacious rings, and revell'd half
the year. }

I speak of ancient times ; for now the swain
Returning late may pass the woods in vain,
And never hope to see the nightly train : }
In vain the dairy now with mints is dreft,
The dairy-maid expects no fairy-guest }
To skim the bowls, and after pay the feast.
She sighs, and shakes her empty shoes in vain,
No silver-penny to reward her pain : }
For priests with pray'rs, and other godly geer,
Have made the merry goblins disappear ;
And where they play'd their merry pranks before,
Have sprinkled holy water on the floor :
And fry'rs, that through the wealthy regions run
Thick as the motes that twinkle in the sun,
Resort to farmers rich, and bless their halls,
And exorcise the beds, and crost the walls :
This makes the fairy choirs forsake the place,
When once 'tis hallow'd with the rites of grace :
For now where erst the playful elves have been
The fryar's the only apparition seen ;
The maids and women need no danger fear
To walk by night, and sanctity so near :
From fiends and imps he sets the village free,
There haunts not any incubus but he.

It

It so befel in this king Arthur's reign,
A lusty knight was pricking o'er the plain;
A bachelor he was, and of the courtly train.
It happen'd as he rode, a damsel gay
In russet robes to market took her way:
Soon on the girl he cast an am'rous eye,
So straight she walk'd, and on her pastrons high :
If seeing her behind he lik'd her pace;
Now turning short, he better lik'd her face:
He 'lights in haste, and, full of youthful fire,
Obtain'd by force resifless his desire.
This done, away he rode, not unespy'd ;
For swarming at his back the country cry'd ;
And, once in view, they never lost the sight,
But seiz'd, and pinion'd brought to court the knight.

Then courts of kings were held in high renown,
Ere made the common brothels of the town :
There virgins honourable vows receiv'd,
But chaste as maids in monasteries liv'd :
The king himself, to nuptial ties a slave,
No bad example to his poets gave :
And they not bad, but in a vicious age,
Had not, to please the prince, debauch'd the stage.

Now what shoul'd Arthur do ? he lov'd the knight ;
But sov'reign monarchs are the source of right :

Mov'd by the damsel's tears, and common cry,
He doom'd the brutal ravisher to die.

But fair Geneura rose in his defence,
And pray'd so hard for mercy from the prince,
That to his queen the king th' offender gave,
And left it in her pow'r to kill or save.

This gracious act the ladies all approve,
Who thought it much, a man should die for love ;
And with their mistres join'd in close debate,
(Cov'ring their kindness with dissembled hate)

If not to free him, to prolong his fate.

At last agreed, they call'd him by consent
Before the queen and female parliament ;
And the fair speaker rising from her chair,
Did thus the judgment of the house declare :

‘ Sir knight, though I have ask'd thy life, yet still
‘ Thy destiny depends upon my will :
‘ Nor haft thou other surety than the grace
‘ Not due to thee from our offended race.
‘ But as our kind is of a softer mould,
‘ And cannot blood without a sigh behold,

‘ I grant

' I grant thee life ; reserving still the pow'r
 ' To take the forfeit when I see my hour ;
 ' Unless thy answer to my next demand
 ' Shall set thee free from our avenging hand :
 ' The question, whose solution I require,
 ' Is, *What the sex of women most desire ?*
 ' In this dispute thy judges are at strife :
 ' Beware ; for on thy wit depends thy life.
 ' Yet (lest surpris'd, unknowing what to say,
 ' Thou damn thyself) we give thee farther day :
 ' A year is thine, to wander at thy will,
 ' And learn from others, if thou want'st the skill.
 ' But, not to hold our proffer turn'd in scorn,
 ' Good sureties will we have for thy return ;
 ' That at the time prefix'd thou shalt obey,
 ' And at thy pledges' peril keep thy day.'

Woe was the knight at this severe command !

But well he knew 'twas bootless to withstand :
 The terms accepted, as the fair ordain,
 He put in bail for his return again ;
 And promis'd answer at the day affign'd,
 The best, with heav'n's assistance, he could find.

His leave thus taken, on his way he went
 With heavy heart, and full of discontent,
 Misdoubting much, and fearful of th' event.

'Twas hard the truth of such a point to find,
As was not yet agreed among the kind.
Thus on he went; still anxious more and more,
Ask'd all he met, and knock'd at ev'ry door;
Enquir'd of men; but made his chief request
To learn from women what they lov'd the best.
They answer'd each according to her mind,
To please herself, not all the female kind.
One was for wealth, another was for place:
Crones, old and ugly, wish'd a better face;
Some to be widows wish'd, and some to wed,
Some to live ever single—so they said.
Some said, the sex were pleas'd with handsome lies,
And some gross flatt'ry lov'd without disguise:
Truth is, says one, he seldom fails to win,
Who flatters well; for that's our darling sin.
But long attendance, and a duteous mind,
Will work ev'n with the wifest of our kind.
One thought the sex's prime felicity
Was from the bonds of wedlock to be free;
Their pleasures, hours, and actions all their own,
And uncontroll'd to give account to none.
Some wish a husband-fool; but such are curst,
For fools perverse, of husbands are the worst:

All

All women would be counted chaste and wise;
 Nor should our spouses see, but with our eyes:
 For fools will prate; and though they want the wit
 To find close faults, yet open blots will hit:
 Though better for their ease to hold their tongue,
 For womankind was never in the wrong.
 So noise ensues, and quarrels last for life;
 The wife abhors the fool, the fool the wife.
 And some men say, that great delight have we
 To be for truth extoll'd, and secrecy;
 And constant in one purpose still to dwell,
 And not our husband's counsels to reveal.
 But that's a fable; for our sex is frail,
 Inventing rather than not tell a tale.
 Like leaky sieves, no secrets we can hold:
 Witness the famous tale that Ovid told.

Midas the king, as in his book appears,
 By Phœbus was endow'd with asses ears,
 Which under his long locks he well conceal'd,
 (As monarchs' vices must not be reveal'd)
 For fear the people have 'em in the wind,
 Who long ago were neither dumb nor blind;
 Nor apt to think from heav'n their title springs,
 Since Jove and Mars left off begetting kings:

This Midas knew ; and durst communicate
 To none but to his wife, his ears of state.
 One must be trusted, and he thought her fit,
 As passing prudent, and a parlous wit.
 To this fagacious confessor he went,
 And told her what a gift the gods had sent ;
 But told it under matrimonial seal,
 With strict injunction never to reveal.
 The secret heard, she plighted him her troth
 (And sacred sure is ev'ry woman's oath)
 The royal malady should rest unknown,
 Both for her husband's honour and her own :
 But ne'ertheless she pin'd with discontent ;
 The counsel rumbled till it found a vent.
 The thing, she knew, she was oblig'd to hide ;
 By int'rest and by oath the wife was ty'd :
 But if she told it not, the woman dy'd.
 Loath to betray a husband and a prince,
 But she must burst, or blab ; and no pretence
 Of honour ty'd her tongue from self-defence.
 A marshy ground commodiously was near ;
 Thither she ran, and held her breath for fear,
 Lest if a word she spoke of any thing,
 That word might be the secret of the king.

Thus,

Thus, full of counsel, to the fen she went,
Grip'd all the way, and longing for a vent :
Arriv'd, by pure necessity compell'd,
On her majestic marrow-bones she kneel'd ;
Then to the waters' brink she laid her head,
And, as a Bittour bumps within a reed,
‘ To thee alone, O lake ! she said, I tell
‘ (And, as thy queen, command thee to conceal)
‘ Beneath his locks the king my husband wears
‘ A goodly royal pair of asses ears.
‘ Now I have eas'd my bosom of the pain,
‘ Till the next longing fit returns again !’

Thus through a woman was the secret known ;
Tell us, and in effect you tell the town.
But to my tale : The knight with heavy cheer,
Wand'ring in vain, had now consum'd the year :
One day was only left to solve the doubt ;
Yet knew no more than when he first set out.
But home he must ; and, as th' award had been,
Yield up his body captive to the queen.
In this despairing state he happ'd to ride,
As fortune led him, by a forest side :
Lonely the vale, and full of horror stood,
Brown with the shade of a religious wood :

When

When full before him, at the noon of night,
(The moon was up, and shot a gleamy light)
He saw a choir of ladies in a round,
That feathly footing seem'd to skim the ground :
Thus dancing hand in hand, so light they were,
He knew not where they trod, on earth or air.
At speed he drove, and came a sudden guest,
In hope where many women were, at least
Some one by chance might answer his request.
But faster than his horse the ladies flew,
And in a trice were vanish'd out of view.

One only hag remain'd ; but fouler far
Than grandame apes in Indian forests are ;
Against a wither'd oak she lean'd her weight,
Propp'd on her trusty staff, not half upright,
And dropp'd an awkward court'sy to the knight :
Then said, " What makes you, sir, so late abroad
" Without a guide, and this no beaten road ?
" Or want you aught that here you hope to find,
" Or travel for some trouble in your mind ?
" The last I gues ; and, if I read aright,
" Those of our sex are bound to serve a knight :
" Perhaps good counsel may your grief assuage ;
" Then tell your pain : for wisdom is in age."

To

To this the knight: 'Good mother, would you
know

' The secret cause and spring of all my woe ?
' My life must with to-morrow's light expire,
' Unless I tell *what women most desire*.
' Now, could you help me at this hard essay,
' Or for your inborn goodness, or for pay,
' Yours is my life, redeem'd by your advice ;
' Ask what you please, and I will pay the price :
' The proudest kerchief of the court shall rest
' Well satisfy'd of what they love the best.'
' Plight me thy faith, quoth she, that *what I ask*,
' Thy danger over, and perform'd the task,
' That shalt thou give for hire of thy demand ;
' Here, take thy oath, and seal it on my hand ;
' I warrant thee, on peril of my life,
' Thy words shall please both widow, maid, and wife.'

More words there needed not to move the knight
To take her offer, and his truth to plight.
With that she spread her mantle on the ground,
And, first enquiring whither he was bound,
Bid him not fear, though long and rough the way,
At court he should arrive ere break of day :

His

His horse should find the way without a guide,
She said: with fury they began to ride,
He on the midst, the beldam at his side.
The horse what devil drove I cannot tell;
But only this, they sped their journey well:
And all the way the crone inform'd the knight,
How he should answer the demand aright.

To court they came: the news was quickly spread,
Of his returning to redeem his head.

The female senate was assembled soon,
With all the mob of women in the town:
The queen late lord chief justice of the hall,
And bade the cryer cite the criminal.

The knight appear'd, and silence they proclaim,
Then first the culprit answer'd to his name:
And, after forms of law, was last requir'd
To name the thing that women most desir'd.

Th' offender, taught his lesson by the way,
And by his counsel order'd what to say,
Thus bold began: " My lady liege, said he,
" What all your sex desire, is Sov'reignty.
" The wife affects her husband to command;
" All must be hers, both money, house and land.

" The

“ The maids are mistresses ev'n in their name ;
“ And of their servants full dominion claim.
“ This, at the peril of my head, I say,
“ A blunt plain truth ; the sex aspires to sway,
“ You to rule all, while we, like slaves, obey.”

There was not one, or widow, maid, or wife,
But said, the knight had well deserv'd his life.
Ev'n fair Geneura, with a blush, confess'd
The man had found what women love the best.

Up starts the beldam, who was there unseen,
And, rev'rence made, accosted thus the queen :
‘ My liege, said she, before the court arise,
‘ May I, poor wretch, find favour in your eyes,
‘ To grant my just request ? 'Twas I who taught
‘ The knight this answer, and inspir'd his thought.
‘ None but a woman could a man direct
‘ To tell us women, what we most affect.
‘ But first I swore him on his knightly troth,
‘ (And here demand performance of his oath)
‘ To grant the boon that next I should desire :
‘ He gave his faith, and I expect my hire :
‘ My promise is fulfill'd : I sav'd his life,
‘ And claim his debt, to take me for his wife.’

The

The knight was ask'd, nor could his oath deny,
But hop'd they would not force him to comply.
The women, who would rather wrest the laws,
Than let a sister-plaintiff lose the cause,
(As judges on the bench more gracious are,
And more attent to brothers of the bar)
Cry'd one and all, the suppliant should have right,
And to the grandame-hag adjug'd the knight.

In vain he sigh'd, and oft with tears desir'd
Some reasonable suit might be requir'd.
But still the crone was constant to her note ;
The more he spoke, the more she stretch'd her throat.
In vain he proffer'd all his goods, to save
His body, destin'd to that living grave.
The liqu'rish hag rejects the pelf with scorn ;
And nothing but the man would serve her turn.
“ Not all the wealth of eastern kings, said she,
“ Hath pow'r to part my plighted love and me :
“ And old and ugly as I am, and poor,
“ Yet never will I break the faith I swore :
“ For mine thou art by promise, during life,
“ And I thy loving and obedient wife.”
“ My love ! Nay, rather my confusion thou,
“ Said he ; nor am I bound to keep my vow :

“ The

“ The fiend, thy fire, has sent thee from below,
“ Else how could’st thou my secret sorrows know ?
“ Avaunt, old witch ; for I renounce thy bed :
“ The queen may take the forfeit of my head,
“ Ere any of my race so foul a crone shall wed. ”

Both heard, the judge pronounc’d against the knight,
So was he marry’d in his own despite :
And all day after hid him as an owl,
Not able to sustain a fight so foul.

Perhaps the reader thinks I do him wrong,
To pass the marriage-feast and nuptial song :
Mirth there was none, the man was *a-la-mort*,
And little courage had to make his court.

To bed they went, the bridegroom and the bride :
Was never such an ill-pair’d couple ty’d.

Restless, he toss’d and tumbled to and fro,
And roll’d and wriggled further off for woe.

The good old wife lay smiling by his side,
And caught him in her quiv’ring arms, and cry’d,
“ When you my ravish’d predecessor saw,
“ You were not then become this man of straw ; ”

“ Had you been such, you might have ’scap’d the law. ”

“ Is this the custom of king Arthur’s court ? ”

“ Are all round-table knights of such a sort ? ”

“ Remember ”

“ Remember I am she who fav'd your life,
“ Your loving, lawful, and complying wife :
“ Not thus you swore in your unhappy hour,
“ Nor I for this return employ'd my pow'r.
“ In time of need I was your faithful friend ;
“ Nor did I since, nor ever will offend.
“ Believe me, my lov'd lord, 'tis much unkind ;
“ What fury has possest'd your alter'd mind ?
“ Thus on my wedding-night—without pretence—
“ Come, turn this way, or tell me my offence.
“ If not your wife, let reason's rule persuade ;
“ Name but my fault, amends shall soon be made.”

“ Amends ! nay, that's impossible, said he ;
“ What change of age or ugliness can be ?
“ Or, could Medea's magick mend thy face,
“ Thou art descended from so mean a race,
“ That never knight was match'd with such disgrace. }
“ What wonder, madam, if I move my side,
“ When, if I turn, I turn to such a bride ?”
“ And is this all that troubles you so sore ?”
“ And, what the devil could'ft thou wish me more ?”
“ Ah, Benedicite ! reply'd the crone :
“ Then cause of just complaining you have none.

“ The

‘ The remedy to this were soon apply’d,
‘ Would you be like the bridegroom to the bride.
‘ But (for you say, a long-descended race,
‘ And wealth and dignity, and pow’r and place,
‘ Make gentlemen, and that your high degree
‘ Is much disparag’d to be match’d with me ;)
‘ Know this, my lord, nobility of blood
‘ Is but a glitt’ring and fallacious good :
‘ The nobleman is he, whose noble mind
‘ Is fill’d with inborn worth, unborrow’d from his kind.
‘ The King of heav’n was in a manger laid,
‘ And took his earth but from an humble maid ;
‘ Then what can birth or mortal men bestow ?
‘ Since floods no higher than their fountains flow.
‘ We, who for name and empty honour strive,
‘ Our true nobility from him derive.
‘ Your ancestors, who puff your mind with pride,
‘ And vast estates to mighty titles ty’d,
‘ Did not your honour, but their own advance ;
‘ For virtue comes not by inheritance.
‘ If you tralinate from your father’s mind,
‘ What are you else but of a bastard-kind ?
‘ Do as your great progenitors have done,
‘ And by your virtues prove yourself their son.

- ‘ No father can infuse or wit or grace ;
- ‘ A mother comes across, and mars the race. ’
- ‘ A grandfire or a grandame taints the blood ;
- ‘ And seldom three descents continue good.
- ‘ Were virtue by descent, a noble name
- ‘ Could never villanize his father’s fame ;
- ‘ But as the first, the last of all the line
- ‘ Would, like the sun, ev’n in descending shine.
- ‘ Take fire, and bear it to the darkest house
- ‘ Betwixt king Arthur’s court and Caucasus,
- ‘ If you depart, the flame shall still remain,
- ‘ And the bright blaze enlighten all the plain :
- ‘ Nor, till the fuel perish, can decay,
- ‘ By nature form’d on things combustible to prey.
- ‘ Such is not man, who, mixing better seed
- ‘ With worse, begets a base, degen’rate breed :
- ‘ The bad corrupts the good, and leaves behind
- ‘ No trace of all the great begetter’s mind.
- ‘ The father sinks within his son, we see,
- ‘ And often rises in the third degree :
- ‘ If better luck a better mother give,
- ‘ Chance gave us being, and by chance we live.
- ‘ Such as our atoms were, ev’n such are we,
- ‘ Or call it chance, or strong necessity,
- ‘ Thus, loaded with dead weight, the will is free. }

‘ And

' And thus it needs must be: for feed conjoin'd
 ' Lets into nature's work th' imperfect kind.
 ' But fire, th' enliv'ner of the gen'ral frame,
 ' Is one, its operation still the same.
 ' Its principle is in itself; while ours
 ' Works, as confed'rates war, with mingled pow'rs :
 ' Or man, or woman, whichsoever fails :
 ' And oft the vigour of the worse prevails.
 ' Æther with Sulphur blended alters hue,
 ' And casts a dusky gleam of Sodom blue.
 ' Thus in a brute their ancient honour ends,
 ' And the fair mermaid in a fish descends :
 ' The line is gone; no longer duke or earl;
 ' But, by himself degraded, turns a churl.
 ' Nobility of blood is but renown
 ' Of thy great fathers, by their virtue known,
 ' And a long trail of light to thee descending down. }
 ' If in thy smoke it ends, their glories shine;
 ' But infamy and villanage are thine.
 ' Then what I said before is plainly show'd,
 ' The true nobility proceeds from God :
 ' Not left us by inheritance, but giv'n
 ' By bounty of our stars, and grace of heav'n.

‘ Thus from a captive Servius Tullus rose,
‘ Whom for his virtues the first Romans chose.
‘ Fabricius from their walls repell’d the foe,
‘ Whose noble hands had exercis’d the plough.
‘ From hence, my lord and love, I thus conclude,
‘ That though my homely ancestors were rude,
‘ Mean as I am, yet I may have the grace
‘ To make you father of a gen’rous race.
‘ And noble then am I, when I begin,
‘ In virtue cloth’d, to cast the rags of sin :
‘ If poverty be my upbraided crime,
‘ And you believe in heav’n, there was a time
‘ When he, the great controller of our fate,
‘ Deign’d to be man, and liv’d in low estate :
‘ Which he, who had the world at his dispose,
‘ If poverty were vice, would never choose.
‘ Philosophers have said, and poets sing,
‘ That a glad poverty’s an honest thing.
‘ Content is wealth, the riches of the mind ;
‘ And happy he who can that treasure find.
‘ But the base miser starves amidst his stote,
‘ Broods on his gold, and griping still at more,
‘ Sits sadly pining, and believes he’s poor.

}
‘ The

- ‘ The ragged beggar, though he wants relief,
- ‘ Has not to lose, and sings before the thief.
- ‘ Want is a bitter and a hateful good,
- ‘ Because its virtues are not understood :
- ‘ Yet many things, impossible to thought,
- ‘ Have been by need to full perfection brought :
- ‘ The daring of the soul proceeds from thence,
- ‘ Sharpnes of wit, and active diligence :
- ‘ Prudence at once and fortitude it gives,
- ‘ And, if in patience ta'en, it mends our lives :
- ‘ For ev'n that indigence that brings me low,
- ‘ Makes me myself and him above to know :
- ‘ A good which none would challenge, few would
 choōse ;
- ‘ A fair posseffion, which mankind refuse.
- ‘ If we from wealth to poverty descend,
- ‘ Want gives to know the flatt'rer from the friend.
- ‘ If I am old and ugly, well for you ;
- ‘ No lewd adult'rer will my love pursue.
- ‘ Nor jealousy, the bane of marry'd life,
- ‘ Shall haunt you, for a wither'd homely wife :
- ‘ For age and uglineſs, as all agree,
- ‘ Are the best guards of female chaſtity.

‘ Yet, since I see your mind is worldly bent,
‘ I’ll do my best to further your content ;
‘ And therefore, of two gifts in my dispose,
‘ Think ere you speak, I grant you leave to choose :
‘ Would you I should be still deform’d and old,
‘ Nauseous to touch, and loathsome to behold ;
‘ On this condition, to remain for life
‘ A careful, tender, and obedient wife,
‘ In all I can contribute to your ease,
‘ And not in deed, or word, or thought displease ?
‘ Or, would you rather have me young and fair,
‘ And take the chance that happens to your share ?
‘ Temptations are in beauty and in youth ;
‘ And how can you depend upon my truth ?
‘ Now weigh the danger with the doubtful bliss,
‘ And thank yourself, if aught should fall amiss.’

Sore sigh’d the knight, who this long sermon heard :
At length, considering all, his heart he cheer’d ;
And thus reply’d : “ My lady, and my wife,
“ To your wise conduct I resign my life :
“ Choose you for me ; for well you understand
“ The future good and ill on either hand :
“ But, if an humble husband may request,
“ Provide, and order all things for the best :

“ Yours

“ Yours be the care to profit, and to please ;
“ And let your subject-servant take his ease.”
“ Then thus in peace, quoth she, concludes the strife,
“ Since I am turn’d the husband, you the wife :
“ The matrimonial victory is mine ;
“ Which, having fairly gain’d, I will resign.
“ Forgive, if I have said or done amiss,
“ And seal the bargain with a friendly kiss :
“ I promis’d you but one content to share ;
“ But now I will become both good and fair.
“ No nuptial quarrel shall disturb your ease,
“ The bus’ness of my life shall be to please.
“ And for my beauty, that as time shall try ;
“ But draw the curtain first, and cast your eye.”

He look’d, and saw a creature heav’ly fair,
In bloom of youth, and of a charming air.
With joy he turn’d, and seiz’d her iv’ry arm ;
And, like Pygmalion, found the statue warm.
Small arguments there needed to prevail,
A storm of kisses pour’d as thick as hail.
Thus, long in mutual bliss they lay embrac’d,
And their first love continu’d to the last :
One sunshine was their life ; no cloud between ;
Nor ever was a kinder couple seen.

PROLOGUE

TO THE

FRYAR'S TALE.

FULL on the Sumner lour'd the licenc'd Fryar,
And, suffocating, boil'd and burn'd with ire.
Yet, caution'd by our Host, nor rule he broke,
Nor, till the Dame had finish'd, word he spoke.
Then threw he, as he thought, a lucky hit ;
For, of his house, he was a parlous wit.

“ Dame, you have led, quoth he, a merry life ;
“ Happy the man, that marries such a wife !
“ Wedlock's a knotty point, I must declare ;
“ But you have touch'd it to a single hair :
“ And, may I die, though canvass'd in the schools,
“ 'Twas never settled yet by juster rules.
“ Here let me only tell you, by the way,
“ Though right in most that you was pleas'd to say,
“ Yet in your free citations you are wrong ;
“ 'Tis little less than petulance of tongue.
“ Beneath your feet be the sixth husband trod ;
“ But use with due respect the word of God,

“ 'Tis

“ 'Tis what no layman should presume to name :
“ But, for a woman—madam, fye, for shame !
“ Texts and authorities are sacred mines :
“ Leave quoting Scripture to us found divines.
 “ Ev'n I myself a Sumner's story choose,
“ Not aiming to instruct you, but amuse.
“ Nam'd I a Sumner ? be it understood,
“ I mean not of the man to say much good :
“ Like Tyburn Jack, you know him by his station :
“ A Sumner is a bawd for fornication !”
 “ Hold ! said our Host ; a Churchman should be meek ;
“ A Christian you ! and with such rancour speak ?
“ Be courteous, humble, as becomes a priest ;
“ Abuse no friend in company at least.
“ This the forbearance of a Fryar profes'd ?—
“ Tell on your tale, and let the Sumner rest.’
 “ Nay, quoth the Sumner, give him length of rope,
“ Pardie ! my staff shall tally with his cope !
“ For I will bring a licens'd Fryar to view,
“ A pattern he of all the fawning crew.
“ The merit of their function I will show,
“ And where they hold their office all shall know.”
 “ No more of this, our Host in fury cry'd :
“ Begin, I say, sir Fryar !’ The Fryar comply'd.

THE
 SUMNER AND THE DEVIL:
 OR, THE
 FRYAR'S TALE.

ARIGOROUS Archdeacon whilom liv'd,
 From whom severest justice guilt receiv'd ;
 Him no evasions ever could elude ;
 Offending sinners strictly he pursu'd.
 But fornicators were in greatest awe :
 On them he always put the penal law.
 And they whose tythes were slow of coming-in,
 (To cheat the clergy is a crying sin !)
 Them oft with mulcts pecuniary he fin'd,
 Nor let them cheat the church, howe'er inclin'd.
 For ere the bishop caught them with his hook,
 They were first enter'd in th' archdeacon's book.

He had a Sumner, bred to pious guiles,
 To fraud, and true ecclesiastic wiles ;
 To none in craft inferior ; none so fit
 To burlesque virtue, by defending it.

Immoral

Immoral actions filly could he trace
Through ev'ry path of the dissembler's maze.
One or two leachers he would gently use,
If they as many dozen would accuse :
Whene'er a criminal impeach'd did stand,
Pimps, bawds, and fly informers were at hand :
Whate'er was urg'd, or right, or wrong, they swore,
And, conscience-proof, false witness gladly bore.
They gave him informations not a few,
Some of imaginary crimes, some true ;
And new reviv'd the Devil's part of old,
First tempted wretches to offend, then sold.
For his advantage they took mighty pains,
And shar'd some little portion of his gains.
His master thought he most uprightly liv'd,
Nor ever found wherein he was deceiv'd.
Oft would he issue summons without leave,
And ample bribes, to drop the cause, receive.
For when men stand in danger of a curse,
Who, to preserve his soul, would grudge his purse ?
Thus ran he on, intrepid in deceit,
Nor fear'd to be detected of the cheat.
He was, to give him his undoubted laud,
A downright Thief, a Sumner, and a Bawd.

He

/He true-bred harlots always kept in pay,
Who flily told if any went astray.
No sooner did he know th' offender's name,
But out a forg'd mandamus quickly came :
For diff'rent ends the guilty two appear ;
Her, her own profit brings ; him, conscious fear.
Th' event, as he design'd, was still the same,
The man to pill, but to excuse the dame.
Then smoothly would he cry, " Your honest look
" Prevails ; I'll cross you in th' archdeacon's book.
" Henceforth beware, and never more offend ;
" Believe me, much I hazard for my friend."
Thus gravely poor delinquent would he fright,
Till a sufficient bribe set all things right.

It so befel, that on a certain day,
This Sumner, ever waiting for his prey,
Tow'rds a poor widow's with a summons went ;
Whate'er the cause, a bribe was the intent.
And riding gently by a forest-side,
A jolly yeoman he before him spy'd ;
Whose dapple grey in haughty manner pranc'd,
And to the music of his own hoofs danc'd.
The Sumner kindly hail'd ; he gently smil'd,
And greeted him with salutation mild.

The

The yeoman ask'd, " Proceed you far to-day ?"
" No, said the Sumner, but a little way :
" At a small distance hence, is my intent,
" To gather for my lord a little rent."
" Are you a steward then ?" the yeoman said :
He answ'ring, ' Yes,' conceal'd his proper trade :
He was a little modest ; and, for shame,
Would not profess th' unreputable name.
" A steward ! said the yeoman ; let us greet,
" I'm overjoy'd a brother here to meet :
" For I'm a steward too, no less than thou,
" Though in this country unacquainted now.
" Howe'er, I hope we shall familiar grow,
" When we each other somewhat better know.
" Then, pr'ythee, mutual friendship let us swear ;
" Silver and gold I have enough to spare.
" And if you hap to come within our shire,
" All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire."
" Done, quoth the Sumner, brotherhood I swear ;
" Henceforth a mutual friendship let us bear.
" And whosoe'er in love is first remiss,
" Partake he nought of heav'n's eternal bliss."
Thus travell'd they together, side by side,
The Sumner pleas'd, the Yeoman satisfy'd.

The

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The Sumner next began t' inquire his name,
• Whither his journey tended ? whence he came ?
• And where, said he, may I a visit pay,
• If e'er my kinder fortune lead that way ?

He answer'd, " Brother, hence, far low, I live,
" Where I to friends no cold reception give.
" But of the road I'll draw you such a chart,
" You shall not miss the way—ere we depart."

" Now, brother, quoth the Sumner, as we ride,
• Since in your honesty I may confide,
• (Since you're a steward too) I do beseech,
• That you some fraudulent arts of gain would teach.
• Instruct me to make profits of my place,
• Without unseasonable checks of grace.
• Tell, in mine office how I most may win,
• And spare not, or for conscience, or for sin."

" Troth, brother dear, I'll tell a faithful tale ;
" My wages, I confess, are strait and small :
" My lord is careful, vigilant, and close,
" And avarice in all his actions shows ;
" Therefore I study first for his content ;
" Then levy supernumerary rent.
" In short, I chiefly by extortion live,
" And gladly pocket what the tenants give :

" From

“ From year to year I win all my expence,
“ Sometimes by flight, sometimes by violence.
“ I plainly tell my mind, and nothing spare.”
“ Right so, the Sumner answer'd, I do fare :
“ My conscience ne'er prohibits me to get ;
“ But, right or wrong—all's fish that comes to net.
“ But for extortion, I should surely starve,
“ And they deserve no meat, who cannot carve.
“ Let squeamish stomachs fly ill-gotten feasts ;
“ Give me the man, that what he eats, digests.
“ In short, a thousand reasons I could give ;
“ The mighty law of nature bids us live, }
“ And all our means are honest, if we thrive. }
“ But little need requires that I should preach
“ To one, much better qualify'd to teach.
“ Well are we met, by holy sweet St. Jame ;
“ And, brother, by your leave, I crave your name.”
“ My name, the yeoman, smiling, said, I'll tell ;
“ I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell.
“ And here I ride about, like you, in quest,
“ As you yourself not long ago confess'd.
“ My purchase is th' effect of all my rent :
“ And ride not you upon the same intent ?

“ You

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“ You seek for lucre, never caring how :
“ Just so, with such design, I travel now.”
‘ Ah ! bless us ! the affrighted Sumner cries,
‘ How has your cloven foot escap’d my eyes ?
‘ Can you thus shrewdly mortal actions ape ?
‘ For you, as well as I, have human shape.
‘ Or serve you any form determinate,
‘ Whilst you remain in your infernal state ?”
“ No, certainly, he answer’d, we have none ;
“ But at our pleasure we can take us one.
“ Or come an immaterial, seeming shape ;
“ Appear a boar, a lion, man, or ape.
“ Or like an angel we can sometimes go :
“ Nor is it wondrous if we can do so ;
“ When paltry jugglers can mankind deceive,
“ By cant affisted, and an open sleeve.
“ What pow’r is his, who, master of hell’s tricks,
“ Can form, on whate’er shape his fancy fix ?”
‘ But, said the Sumner, why do you thus frame
‘ So various forms, nor always use the same ?”
“ Because, quoth he, our forms we always make
“ The readiest our intended prey to take.
“ Nor are we troubled much : the hope of gains
“ Takes off the weight of our industrious pains.
“ Sometimes

“ Sometimes a glutton-belly does confine,
“ Gazzling us up, instead of vintners' wine ;
“ Till, by excessive drinking over-charg'd,
“ The gorge o'erflows, and we're again enlarg'd.
“ Those who enjoy us, we by turns entrap,
“ And many a drunkard proves the Devil's chap.
“ Sometimes, like ivory, with number'd spots,
“ We breed loud strife amongst contentious sots ;
“ Or at Groom-Porter's, rattling all the night,
“ Brawls, oaths, and deep-mouth'd blasphemies excite ;
“ Ruin young squires and tradesmen in a trice :
“ Hence men exclaim, *The Devil's in the dice !*
“ Oft rule we statesmen's, oft directors' dreams ;
“ Hence plots, conspiracies, and South-Sea schemes.
“ When hatch'd rebellions first are set on foot,
“ And discontent in subjects' hearts takes root,
“ The chief, by us beguil'd, destroys their lives,
“ And he betrays it first, who first contrives.
“ Thus we concerted projects often state,
“ And spoil a nation's views of growing great.
“ The greedy kingdom hugs the airy cheat,
“ And the directors thrive by the deceit ;
“ Till, having lost the entertaining hope,
“ We leave them to the mercy of a rope.

“ Some, not unwisely, have th’ occasion guess’d ;
“ Who, but the Devil, could these things suggest ?
“ Sometimes expressly pow’r to us is giv’n,
“ And we are made the instruments of heav’n.
“ The body by afflictions oft we tempt,
“ But the immortal soul is still exempt.
“ Sometimes by black despair we try the soul,
“ But leave the untouched body healthy, whole.
“ Then, if our arts are vig’rouly withstood,
“ Man’s former evils turn to future good.
“ The slaves to man we oftentimes are made,
“ As when the great apostle I obey’d :
“ Nor dare we their superior pow’r oppose ;
“ Thus Dunstan took the Devil by the nose.”
“ But, said the Sumner, do you always thus
“ Take forms substantial, when you visit us ?”
“ No, no, the Fiend reply’d, sometimes we feign,
“ And but appear imaginary men ;
“ As, when through clefted floorings we arise,
“ And, vanishing, beguile poor mortals’ eyes.
“ Sometimes from graves dead carcases we hire,
“ To answer what our votaries require ;
“ And dark futurity with truth foretel,
“ As formerly the witch rais’d Samuel ;
“ Yet

“ Yet boldly some aver, it was not he ;
“ But I'll not here enforce divinity.
“ Yet thee with sober seriousness I warn,
“ Thou wilt erewhile have little cause to learn ;
“ For I have hopes, my dearest friend to see,
“ Where 'twill be needless to enquire of me.
“ But let us on : I've travell'd all the day,
“ Without the smalleſt hopes of any prey :
“ If now my company you will receive,
“ Forward I'll ride, until your friend you leave.”
“ Nay, said the Sumner, that shall ne'er betide,
“ My well-try'd honesty is known full wide :
“ I will preserve my faithful promise well,
“ Although thou wert the emperor of hell.
“ Friends we'll continue, as we lately sware,
“ And by accord our booty thus we'll share :
“ Content yourself with whatsoe'er you gain,
“ And I'll receive the product of my brain.
“ But if one of us should have more than t'other,
“ Let him be true, and part it with his brother.”
“ With all my heart, the Devil answer'd straight,
“ Hence quickly ; let's pursue our better fate.”
Thus they proceed, till coming near a town,
(Plac'd in a miry valley deeply down)

They met a cart, full heavy charg'd with hay ;
 The carter driving through a dirty way.
 Deep were the tracks, uneven was the road,
 And the tir'd horses droop'd beneath the load :
 The carter strove, and plentifully smote,
 ' What, are you jaded ? Stir you not a foot ?
 ' The Devil himself e'en carry you away ;
 ' I freely give him horses, cart and hay.'
 The Sumner list'ning, to his friend drew near,
 And, smiling, told him softly in his ear,
 ' Harken, my brother, you have got a prey ;
 ' Did you not hear th' unthinking carter say,
 ' He gave 'em you ?—Prevent a second word ;
 ' No better prey your fortune will afford.'
 " Nay, quoth the Devil, 'tis not his intent ;
 " Whate'er he said, far otherwise he meant.
 " Ask him yourself, if you believe not me ;
 " Or stay a little longer here, and see."

Th' impatient carter, joining all his force,
 With utmost fury whipp'd the foremost horse.
 He stoop'd, and stretch'd, and quickly freed the cart :
 ' Heit ! said the carter, blessings on thy heart !
 ' Well hast thou drawn, and freed us at a jerk ;
 ' Jesu preserve thee for thy helpful work.'

" Now,

" Now, said the Devil, credit what I told ;
 " I knew his words, their purport would not hold :
 " Whate'er he spake, he never did design :
 " Thus words and actions very seldom join.
 " But let us forward towards yonder plains ;
 " Here we but get our labour for our pains."

No sooner past the town a little way,
 The Sumner call'd, ' My dearest brother, stay ;
 ' Here lives a widow in this little house,
 ' Would sooner die than give away a soufe.
 ' Observe how furiously she'll rant and swear ;
 ' I'll extort twelve-pence, though I leave her bare.
 ' That I've th' archdeacon's summons I'll pretend,
 ' Although I never knew her once offend :
 ' Perhaps you know not how we Sumners thrive ;
 ' So take example here how well we live.'

The Sumner loudly rattled at the door ;
 ' Come out, old double-devil, bawd and whore ;
 ' Come forth and shew yourself, you filthy beast !
 ' What ! you're solacing with some pamper'd priest !'
 " Sweet sir, reply'd the widow, what's your will ?"
 ' I summon you, he answer'd, by this bill :
 ' On pain of 'curing, for your disrespect,
 ' You must your sentence of my lord expect ;
 ' No fine excuse will palliate this neglect.

‘ At nine to-morrow morn precisely come.’
 ‘ Now, Lord ! said she, I cannot stir from home ; }
 ‘ Long sickness has confin’d me to my room ; }
 ‘ I cannot walk, and less endure to ride,
 ‘ I have such pains and pricking in my side.
 ‘ May I not ask a libel in this case,
 ‘ And let my proctor answer in my place ?
 ‘ It won’t be represented as neglect,
 ‘ If he may answer what my foes object.’
 ‘ My friendship, he reply’d, I’ll let you use ;
 ‘ For twelve-pence your appearance I’ll excuse :
 ‘ I would not your expences should be large,
 ‘ Or let your fees run up a needless charge :
 ‘ For proctors, when they get a client in,
 ‘ Fleece him to nakedness, to bones and skin :
 ‘ And through all ages this has been confess’d,
 ‘ That lawyers are but villains at the best.
 ‘ Therefore, that this affair no noise may breed,
 ‘ And save your money ’gainst the time of need,
 ‘ You for the sum I mention’d I’ll acquit ;
 ‘ ’Tis more, indeed, than e’er I ventur’d yet ; }
 ‘ And I no more than half the profit get ;
 ‘ One moiety th’ archdeacon has for fees ;
 ‘ Disbursing therefore twelve-pence, be at ease.’

“ Heav’n

“ Heav'n so protect me from all future sin,
“ Said she, if I the universe should win,
“ I have not twelve-pence I can call my own :
“ Alas ! I'm needy, and past labour grown.
“ Bestow your charity on me poor wretch.”
“ Fruitless, he said, is this thy idle fetch !
“ I've noted thee, thou old contriving jilt !”
“ Yet, she reply'd, I'm ignorant of guilt.”
“ Pay me, he loudly cry'd, or by St. Anne,
“ I'll carry off by downright force your pan.
“ You were indebted to me long before,
“ For being cited when you play'd the whort.
“ I kindly paid your fees, ungrateful trash,
“ Or you had smartly undergone the lash.”
“ Thou ly'ft, said she ; and 'tis a sorry trick,
“ To chouse an honest woman, poor, and sick.
“ Never was I, whilst widow, maid, or wife,
“ Summon'd before your master in my life.
“ Nor was I ever known to have the way
“ Of using filthy tricks in filthier play.
“ And he that ev'ry thing doth timely send,
“ Take thee—and give thee to the foulest fiend.”
Soon as the Fiend her hearty curses heard,
He nearer drew, and asking, thus conferr'd ;

“ Tell me, my dearest mother, do you joke,
“ Or is this kindly wish in earnest spoke ?”
“ I speak, said she, with bitterness of heart,
“ The Devil take him hence before we part,
“ My pan and all, except he doth repent.”
“ Nay, quoth the Sumner, that’s not my intent.
“ This pan I’ll never part with ; ‘tis my own :
“ Would I possess’d each rag that thou haft on.’
“ Now, said the Devil, brother, you shall hear ;
“ This bus’ness I am able best to clear.
“ Our bargain was, each freely should possess.
“ Whate’er was giv’n him ; I expect no less :
“ Your title to this pan you must resign :
“ For by the owner’s gift ‘tis fairly mine.
“ You’ll never part with it ;—your word’s of force ;
“ Your body therefore is my own of course.
“ Besides, I think you equally my claim,
“ As being giv’n me by this injur’d dame.
“ Her pow’rful wishes critically fell :
“ So, faith, sir Sumner, you may go to hell.”

PROLOGUE

TO THE

SUMNER'S TALE.

HERE paus'd the Fryar, to laugh at his own wit,
As having sent the Sumner down the pit:

“ There lies the heritage of proctors civil !

“ I give thee, soul and body, to the Devil !”

But yet, though priest of priest has much to say,
He judg'd it meet to trim it with the lay :
And having vented first his spleen and spite,
Affum'd the look forbearing and contrite !

“ Repent, ye Sumners ! Quit this sinful road !

“ Nor make the fiery gulph your last abode !

“ And, oh ! preserve us he, from guides so blind,

“ Who after his own image form'd mankind.

“ For, of that tribe had I full room to speak,

“ Hell would appear the mansion that they seek.

“ This could I prove by texts, one after one,

“ To Mark from Matthew, and from Luke to John ;

“ And show you, from the very words of Christ,

“ That millions perish, by these fiends entic'd.

“ Fathers

“ Fathers and councils was I here to name,
 “ You’d find no end of everlasting flame :
 “ For there they draw you by a borrow’d sign,
 “ Whence Jesus turn you, of his grace divine.
 “ Then trust not you to a misleading pow’r,
 “ Who, like the Devil, still watches to devour.
 “ To Sumner when was high commission giv’n ?
 “ Ev’n he must first confess, to go to heav’n.
 “ No, would you surely ’scape eternal fire,
 “ A Fryar your intercessor make ; a Fryar !
 “ Take unction from a Mendicant unshod ;
 “ He is the true ambassador of God.”

The Sumner, while the Fryar his tale purfu’d,
 At heart not easy, view’d him, and review’d :
 Rais’d on his horse, and longing to engage,
 He trembled, like an aspin-leaf, with rage.

‘ Now, Sirs, he said, as with the Fryar you bore,
 ‘ So bear with me, and I will quit the score.
 ‘ Our good Licentiate talks of fiends below,
 ‘ As freely as we talk of friends we know.
 ‘ Nor I to doubt their intercourse pretend :
 ‘ For fiend to fryar is just as friend to friend.
 ‘ Who has not heard, how, sleeping in his cell,
 ‘ A Fryar was in a vision rapt to hell ?

‘ Where,

‘ Where, as an angel led him up and down,
‘ He look’d, but could not spy one shaven crown.
‘ Numbers of ev’ry sex and age he sees,
‘ All ranks and stations, functions and degrees;
‘ Ev’n crowds of old acquaintance round him came,
‘ Full many a toping friend and tickling dame.
“ Now, Sir, quoth he, have Fryars such gifted grace,
“ That none descend to this infernal place ?”
“ Not so ! (the angel strait the point explains)
“ Not so ! here millions suffer endless pains.”
‘ Then down he led him to th’ abyss profound,
‘ Where Satan lay at stretch along the ground ;
‘ So broad his buttock (not to rouse our tar)
‘ Twould measure with a first-rate man of war;
‘ And long as is a main-mast was his tail,
‘ Which, when he cock’d, he look’d a ship in sail.
“ Up, firrah (cry’d the angel), Satan, rise !
“ Erect thy tail ! shew where the Friery lies !
“ A brother craves the converse of a brother ;
“ Ope wide, and let him know his nursing mother :
“ Thy nest of Fryars discharge upon the wing ;
“ Rise up.” And up he rises at a spring,
‘ Erects his tail, to pow’r superior meek,
‘ And opes a gap as wide as that of Peake.

‘ Ensued

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‘ Ensued a rumbling sound and brimstone-smell,
‘ Then forth they came in crowds too large to tell,
‘ Fryar urging Fryar, from out the Devil they drive,
‘ As fast as bees that quit a swarming hive ;
‘ Full twenty thousand follow'd ev'ry blast,
‘ And fast as out they came, went in as fast :
‘ For Satan roar'd: “ Fryars, listen to my call,
“ Back to your dormitory, one and all.”
‘ All enter'd, black, or brown, or white, or grey ;
‘ He clap'd his tail between, and down he lay.
 ‘ The Fryar long ruminates the darksome hole,
‘ When to his body God restores his soul.
‘ The matin-bell was sounding as he wak'd,
‘ While ev'ry limb with secret horror quak'd ;
‘ For once a true devout he left his bed,
‘ So ran the Devil's posteriors in his head.
 ‘ Whence heav'n preserve us all, except the Fryar ;
‘ Be that the lot of ev'ry convent-lyar.
‘ Nor, sirs, condemn me, if I turn the scale:
‘ But as you took my prologue, take my tale.’

THE

THE

FARMER AND THE FRYAR:

OR, THE

SUMNER'S TALE.

WHERE Humber's streams divide the fruitful plain,
 here liv'd a Fryar of the begging train ;
 'ho, licens'd, hypocritically bold,
 'ould give his pray'rs, his mass, his heav'n for gold.
 As once, his gown high-tuck'd, his scrip new hung,
 is'd on his staff, he pensive trudg'd along ;
 door stood ope, where oft the beechen bowl,
 niling with nut-brown ale, had cheer'd his soul :
 ently he tapp'd, then cry'd, " May here content
 With peace for ever swell !" and in he went.
 ck lay the Host ; the Fryar growl'd a pray'r,
 nd with an Ave Mary told his care.
 ere down he laid his staff, there hung his hat,
 ush'd from the wicker-chair the tabby cat,
 nd with a solemn leisure down he sat;

 Then

Then thus began: ‘ To-day I preach’d in town ;
 ‘ But kept not servile to the text alone.
 ‘ Ah ! Thomas, had you heard my subtile wit,
 ‘ My glosf, my comments on the holy writ ;
 ‘ Though well I know ’gainst Fryars you incline,
 ‘ You’d own that Fryars were of right divine.’

The Host reply’d, ‘ In comments I’ve no skill ;
 ‘ By comments priests can prove just what they will.
 ‘ Of reas’ning deep, some clerks to shew the force,
 ‘ From head to head drawl out the long discourse ;
 ‘ On this side now, and now on that dispute ;
 ‘ Are now confuted, now again confute ;
 ‘ Make saint with saint, father with father vie,
 ‘ Till glosses prove the Scriptures all a lie.’

“ Ah ! friend, the Fryar cry’d, you’ll nought believe,
 “ But what your simple reason can conceive :
 “ Laymen must credit, though the doctrine’s new ;
 “ The text may vary, but the comment’s true.

The wife tripp’d in, and stopp’d th’ haranguing
 priest ;

A court’sy dropp’d, and welcom’d ev’ry guest :
 Slow from the chair the smiling Fryar rose,
 And made with awkward air his solemn bows :
 Nor there he stopp’d ; but, to enlarge his bliss,
 Squeez’d her soft hand, and smack’d a hearty kiss.

“ Ah !

Ah ! friend, quothe he, how happy is thy life !
Not the whole town can boast so fair a wife :
At church I view'd her, as high mass was said ;
Soft roll'd her eye, and gently wav'd her head ;
Each dame was envying, fighing was each swain,
While she shone fairest of the fairer train."

The sweetly-simp'ring dame new pleasure found,
With greedy ear imbib'd the flatt'ring sound :
rink'd up her tucker, ev'ry charm she try'd,
nd by her little arts reveal'd her pride:
'hen thus address'd him : ' Would you taste our cheer ?
The fair is homely, but the heart sincere !

What could you eat, Sir?'—" Nothing, cry'd the
priest,

But a thin slice of a fat capon's breast ;
A brace of woodcocks, of a pig the head,
With a nice pudding of the whitest bread :
My squeamish stomach loaths a sumptuous treat ;
Learn'd clerks, who study much, but little eat."

Swift tripp'd the dame away, and seem'd to fly,
risk as a colt, and jolly as a pie.

s the Fryar's mind on int'rest chiefly ran,
bsent the wife, he thus accosts the man :
Is not our order pious ? ours, which shares
The day in fasting, and the night in pray'rs ?

" Than.

“ Than those more pious, whom base trifles win,
“ Who hold pluralities to be no sin ?
“ For why should country-parish claim their care ?
“ Curates perform the drudgery of pray'r.
“ Though their whole study is t' increase their store,
“ They talk fine things in praise of being poor ;
“ With mock-humility of fasting preach ;
“ Though their fat sides deny they practise what they
 teach.
“ All priesthood should be meek ; but when there's
 seen
“ The rosy prebend, and the pamper'd dean,
“ Stalk to th' expecting choir with front elate,
“ In all the grandeur of cathedral state ;
“ There doze in stalls, or o'er a sermon nod,
“ Can we suppose them meek, or thoughtful on their
 God ?
“ Thus they :—Ah ! Thomas, Thomas, by St. Ive,
“ 'Tis from the Fryar's zeal the laymen thrive.
“ Hence by our convent's pray'r you're blest with
 wealth,
“ Hence by our masses you'll regain your health.”
 The churl in bed reply'd, ‘ I have been told,
“ The whole pursuit of priesthood is for gold.

“ Thus

' Thus some have said ; this I myself aver,
 ' I'm not a jot the better for their pray'r :
 ' To Monk, to Fryar, and to Priest I've giv'n ;
 ' All were divine ambassadors from heav'n.
 ' But late, alas ! I found this truth confess,
 ' The man that gives the least, succeeds the best.'
 " Well, well (reply'd the priest) appease your rage,
 " War with my patron never will I wage.
 " Some fools indeed will ev'n with kings contend,
 " To liah their vices, or their morals mend.
 " I, to reform a prince, would never arm
 " My tongue with thunder, or with threats alarm ; }
 " Harsh precepts in a court can never charm.
 " There not one vice I'd lash, nor tedious dwell
 " On stings of conscience, or on pains of hell ;
 " But gentle rules in gentle words convey,
 " Till ev'ry conscious fear in hope dissolv'd away.
 " In short, I ne'er with patrons disagree ;
 " If they're resolv'd for hell, what's that to me ?
 " But that your soul to heav'n may be consign'd,
 " Confess to me your crimes, and calm your mind."
 " Faith (cry'd the churlish Host) by good St. John,
 * I've once before to-day been shriv'd by one ;

‘ And once a day’s enough’—“ Enough indeed:
 “ (The sneering priest reply’d, more sure to speed;)
 “ Yet to our convent something you may spare,
 “ And bounteously reward a Fryar’s prayer :
 “ For should you fail, ah ! what I dread to tell,
 “ Saints we must pawn, and fathers we must sell.
 “ The layman’s lost, if lost that learned store ;
 “ Then sermons, comments, lectures are no more :
 “ In vain you’ll wish, you had a Fryar to preach ;
 “ For who, dear sir, can like a Fryar teach ?”

He ends : But ah ! th’ harangue no convert gains ;
 Thomas the same gruff churlish wight remains :
 So daring impious, that he thought the Fryar
 A canting hypocrite, a fawning liar.

Then thus. ‘ D’ye think, sir, that I sure shall
 speed ?’
 “ Host, I as much believe it as my creed ;
 “ Nay, I am positive, the Fryar cry’d.”
 Thomas seem’d pleas’d, and with a smile reply’d,
 ‘ Persuasive are thy words ; while yet I live,
 ‘ In thy own hand, sir Fryar, a boon I’ll give ;
 ‘ On this condition, and on this alone,
 ‘ That the whole convent equal shares the boon.

‘ This

‘ This thou shalt swear.’ Eager he plights his troth,
His maf-s-book kif’sd more firm to bind the oath.
Then Thomas : ‘ Here, thrust down thy hand behind,
‘ Worthy your convent there a gift you’ll find.’
Adown he thrusts his hand into the clift,
And gropes around to find the wish’d-for gift.
Delufive hope ! something too closely pent,
Hoarse-rumbling from within demands a vent :
It burst ; then dissipated here and there,
And fill’d th’ expecting hand with empty air.
Amaz’d, the Fryar started with surprize,
Red glow’d his cheeks, and ardent flash’d his eyes :
“ Is thus, he cry’d, thy penitence confess’d ?
“ Is this, false churl, thy duty to a priest ?”
Nor there he’d ended ; but, to stop the fray,
Men, maids, and wife ran in, and chas’d the Fryar
away.

The priest enrag’d, now meditating ire,
With hasty pace trudg’d to the neighb’ring squire ;
A quorum justice of a sober life,
The parish-umpire, to compose their strife.
‘ Ah ! Benedicite, the Justice cry’d,
‘ What evil could to Fryar John betide ?’

John raving stamp'd, before he silence broke ;
 At last, with raving passion thus he spoke :
 " Divines agree, and sages have confess'd,
 " The church herself is wounded in her priest."
 Again he roar'd. " Pray, sir, your patience hold,
 " The justice cry'd, till all your tale is told."
 The Fryar the fact relates, as told before,
 And as the story heighten'd, rag'd the more ;
 And ever and anon abruptly mix'd
 Revenge, pray'rs, priests, and holy church betwixt.
 " Sancta Maria ! cry'd the squire's fair dame ;
 " Is this, sir Fryar, all the crime you blame ?
 " In my opinion, as I hope to speed,
 " A churl has only done a churlish deed."

Not so the squire, with fager wisdom fraught,
 But gravely paus'd, and seem'd quite lost in thought ;
 In mind revolv'd the statutes o'er and o'er,
 If ever such a case occur'd before :
 Then thus reply'd : ' Good Fryar, that sound and air
 " Should be divided in an equal share
 " Among thirteen—No—not the utmost skill
 " In Euclid's problems could perform this will :
 " The fact, as to a priest, I own uncivil,
 " The inspiration of some freakish devil.

" Ne'er

‘ Ne'er let the madding churl perplex thy soul ;
‘ Sit down, and drown thy sorrow in a bowl.’
Jenkin, the clerk, who heard the whole disaster,
And thought he had more wisdom than his master,
Pertly address'd the squire—‘ Sir, I believe,
‘ Would you, and your good confessor give leave,
‘ I'd shew a way by which the pious tribe
‘ This comic gift should equally divide :
‘ And though I ne'er Euclid's deep problems knew,
‘ You'll all allow, 'tis as an axiom true.
‘ Here, in the parlour, from the air close pent,
‘ I'd have a cart-wheel with twelve spokes be sent,
‘ Which is, save one, the number of the tribe,
‘ Mongst whom I equally this gift divide :
‘ Then to each spoke each lays his rev'rend beard,
‘ Like some wise seers of yore, of whom I've heard ;
‘ Your noble confessor, whom heaven save,
‘ Shall hold his nose upright into the nave ;
‘ The churl be brought ; and could it hap'ly speed,
‘ That he could there repeat his churlish deed :
‘ 'Tis demonstration, that each spoke around
‘ Would equally convey the air and sound.
‘ Indeed, the Fryar here would first be serv'd ;
‘ But, sure this holy man has best deserv'd.’

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The Fryar's frown betray'd his troubled mind ;
But squire and lady thus in judgment join'd,
With a new coat that Jenkin should be clad,
And that the churl was neither fool nor mad.

PROLOGUE

TO THE

CLERK OF OXFORD'S TALE.

MEANTIME our host, the studious youth survey'd :

" You ride as coy and still as any maid,
 " That sits new married at the bridal board :
 " What ! one whole day, and not one single word ?
 " With some hard sophistry, I doubt, you strain,
 " And a new world of logic fills your brain.
 " But Solomon, in prose if not in rhyme,
 " Declares that all things have their place and time.
 " Sir Clerk of Oxford, brighten up your face ;
 " To study here is out of time and place.
 " Who joins in sport (no matter what his coat,
 " Or character of note, or not of note)
 " Should use his freedom, or relax his pride,
 " And by the compact, he subscribes, abide.
 " Then add your share of pleasantry and joke,
 " And, as becomes a subject, bear the yoke.

M 4

" But

“ But preach not you, like starving Fryar in Lent,
“ Numb’ring our sins, and damn, though we repent,
“ Transgressions, with omissions, old and new :
“ Then sowse in hell, without a heav’n in view !
“ Nor yet perplex your text ; this counsel keep
“ In mind : for if you nod, we well may sleep ;
“ Tell us a tale, but not of priests or popes,
“ And spare your figures, and forbear your tropes ;
“ Keep these in store, to kings till you indite ;
“ Then flourish ev’ry sentence that you write !
“ Then stretch your fancy ! then exalt your style !
“ Here all we ask, is but a laugh or smile ;
“ But hold ! I bar all Latin, and all Greek !
“ Speak plain, that we may know what ’tis you speak.”
Mine host, the worthy scholar mild reply’d ;
As free from bookish spleen, as priestly pride ;
“ I bow beneath the rod ; allegiance pay ;
“ And, far as innocence permits, obey.
“ I but demand free liberty of voice ;
“ Light is the tribute, that is given by choice.
“ A tale I bring, but not from streets or stews,
“ At Padua learnt, and of no vulgar muse.
“ ’Tis what Petrarch in friendly converse taught,
“ Petrarch ! who purely wrote, and nobly thought ;
“ Whose

“ Whose works and manners, delicate as sage,
“ Charm'd ev'ry sex and state, from youth to age.
“ This shall his works to future times attest !
“ His manners are no more—with him they rest :
“ Illustrious bard, with laurel'd honours crown'd !
“ And, was it just thy boundless praise to bound,
“ Thou, Sun of Italy ! whose piercing light
“ Dispell'd the shade, forbade it to be night !
“ Oh ! that on me thy rays had longer shone !
“ Too soon departed ! and too lately known !
“ Now deep intomb'd the glorious poet lies ;
“ To death a prey, a lesson to the wise !
“ Far as a friend might yet correct a friend—
“ (Justly to blame, is justly to commend !)
“ High though I prize the work, and lov'd the man ;
“ His proem seems too copious for his plan.
“ Ill would the lengthened prologue suit your taste ;
“ You'd think it disproportion'd, and misplac'd.
“ And much I err, indur'd you the delay ;
“ Tir'd with the prelude, you'd demand the play,
“ Piedmont he sketches, with a master hand !
“ Saluzzo paints ; and Eden is the land !
“ Extends the Appenines ; with these you rise !
“ Then Velusus erects ; you touch the skies !

“ Here

“ Here from a narrow spring, the streams of Po
“ Take birth, and gather vigour as they flow !
“ You hear them downward drive, an eastern course,
“ Grown to a torrent from a scanty source !
“ Fast to Emell their progres you pursue ;
“ A while you keep Ferrarian tow'rs in view ;
“ Thence, chace through flow'ry meads the wat'ry
 train :
“ Till Venice sees their passage to the main.
“ This is the sum ; and this I dare to say :
“ None ever err'd so sweetly from his way.
“ Yet though he leads us through enchanted ground,
“ 'Tis still a needless journey ; round and round.
“ The goal in view, 'tis worse than death to stay ;
“ We stray, yes, though through Paradise we stray.
“ Such noble errors of exalted wit,
“ I dare not copy, though he dare commit.
“ We know our force, know where our strength may
 fail,
“ And pass the preface, to commence the tale.”

GUALTHERUS AND GRIELDA:

OR, THE

CLERK OF OXFORD'S TALE.

DOWN at the foot of Vesulus the cold,
 (Thus ancient bards the moral tale unfold)
 Where first through subterraneous caverns led,
 The springs of Po expand their silver bed ;
 And Italy from Italy divide :
 There lies a district, on the western side ;
 Where, rich in flock and herd, in fruit and grain
 Abundant, nature spreads an ample plain.
 Here, travel'd eyes the varied scene admire,
 The rounded turret, and the gradual spire ;
 From towns and castles that aspiring rise,
 Proud of their wealthy seats, and claim the skies.
 At once for pleasure and for plenty fam'd,
 The country all around Saluzzo nam'd.
 A Marquis rul'd this happy tract of land ;
 Happy in him : he rul'd with easy hand.
 Full ready were his subjects to obey
 The mild indulgence of his gentle sway.

Obedie

Obedient to his will, he govern'd all ;
Both orders, the great vulgar and the small.
Whether from merit due, or lucky fate ;
For worth not always can secure the great.

Well was he born, his ancestry to trace,
No Lombard prince could boast a nobler race.
And fair of face, his face was fair as young ;
Though strong of body, delicate though strong.
Nor was his beauty to his form confin'd,
His person was the image of his mind.
Where courtesy, alike, and honour meet.
Active, but wise ; indulgent, but discreet ;
In camp or council, equal to preside !
Direct in battle, and in law decide !
In this I blame Gualtherus (such his name)
In this, and almost this alone, to blame.
But free from love, from error who is free ?
(The softer sex will sure admit the plea !)
Heirs, to support his name, he never sought,
But turn'd to lighter sport his daily thought.
He never weigh'd, how early or how late,
He sat on matters that concern'd the state.
But thence releas'd, to hawk or hunt prepares ;
And well nigh quite neglects all better cares.

For

For cares, he deem'd the joys of married life.
Fall what might fall, he would not take a wife.

This specious cause new disaffection draws.
And when could subjects find no specious cause ?
(Oft falsely feign'd, but here sincerely meant :)
So flocking on a day, to court they went.
And one, in form, they chose from out the rest
The common voice ! to utter their request ;
Whether, as wisest, to themselves preferr'd,
Or dearest to their lord, and better heard.

“ Thrice noble Marquis ! (thus with humble air,
“ And suppliant voice, he spoke the publick care)
“ If thus assur'd we meet that honour'd face ;
“ 'Tis due to thy humanity and grace.
“ These princely qualities our fears repel ;
“ You prompt to ease our griefs, as we to tell.
“ My lowly pray'r then take not in disdain ;
“ For love and duty force me to complain.
“ But why should I my pray'r, presumptivē, call
“ This universal suit, the pray'r of all ?
“ If from my lips these words of licence break,
“ Thy faithful subjects dictate what I speak.
“ Oft have I gain'd before like audience here ;
“ Nor wer't thou wont to give an heedless ear.

“ Then

“ Then let me still find favour in thy sight,
“ Still, pardon my request, if not requite.
“ While to the gen’ral good I point the way;
“ And we, but wait your judgment to obey.
“ Such is thy rule, and such is our content,
“ Ought to correct not envy could invent.
“ But still forgive, if here with sad preface
“ We doubt the equal bliss of future age;
“ And wish those virtues rare, continued down
“ To latest times, that dignify our own.
“ To serve thee, in thy heirs, thy people want;
“ Nor think this royal gift too much to grant.
“ Then bow thy neck beneath the blissful yoke;
“ The ties of wedlock are not easy broke:
“ But love to marriage lends a silken rein:
“ ’Tis not a servile bond, but virtuous chain.
“ Then, oh ! reflect (for here the danger lies !)
“ Reflect, that time with hasty pinions flies,
“ Time, ever on the wing, time stays for none;
“ Whether we sleep or wake, or stand or run.
“ Though blooming now thy youth, thy vigour green;
“ Age, silent as the night, creeps on unseen;
“ And threatens ev’ry sex, and ev’ry state:
“ No pow’r can shun the certain doom of fate.

“ Certain

“ Certain the doom that he must yield his breath !
“ Uncertain yet the day assign'd by death.
“ If life's a blessing of so short a stay ;
“ Judge what yourself must suffer by delay !
“ Judge what we suffer ! for in this we claim
“ An equal int'rest ; to preserve your name !
“ Preserve your worth ! here ev'ry voice conspires,
“ To leave our sons as happy as their fires !
“ If never yet we disobey'd your will,
“ Accept our offer ! be our parent still !
“ Ourselves, to do thee fame, will make the choice ;
“ A worthy bride, confirm'd by publick voice !
“ Such as deriv'd from some exalted line,
“ Is fit, and only fit to match with thine !
“ For this, in full assembly, we appear,
“ Then pardon our well-meant, though needless fear.
“ Better declare the grievance than conceal ;
“ If 'tis a forward, 'tis an honest zeal.
“ We fear your ancient rights (which heav'n defend !)
“ May to some new, some foreign lord descend.
“ Our free but dutious care, dread liege, excuse ;
“ What much we value, much we fear to lose.”
Their honest plea, in modest speech addrest,
Touch'd with paternal care his gen'rous breast.

By

By reason and by duty they were mov'd ;
 But more than life his liberty he lov'd.
 That he could ease their grief, exalts his mind ;
 The manner only leaves a sting behind.
 A doubtful course propos'd, through which to run,
 Of rough and smooth ; a course he wish'd to shun !
 At length the father o'er the man prevails,
 And publick int'rests turn the private scales.

“ Full dear (he said) is future welfare bought,
 “ Constrain'd to act the thing I never thought ;
 “ Forego my peace ; my freedom lay aside ;
 “ Peace all my pleasure ! freedom, all my pride !
 “ Freedom and peace ! in marriage rarely found !
 “ Then what is to be wiv'd, but to be bound ?
 “ For woman is at best a pleasing cheat ;
 “ Her look is counterfeit, her heart deceit.
 “ All she affects, to catch our ears or eyes,
 “ Is mere delusion, virtue in disguise.
 “ Nor think I aggravate ; when here I view
 “ So many married, and content so few.
 “ And most would own, were but the truth confess,
 “ That state is an incumbrance at the best.
 “ From infancy the knowing dame prepares
 “ The child to lay her baits, and spread her snares ;

“ Man

" Man is their prize, and till the prize they find,
 " No fault appears of body or of mind.
 " But say sincerely, you that have been caught,
 " Which of you boasts a wife without a fault?
 " A thousand I could count you in a trice,
 " Of folly, noise, impertinence, and vice ;
 " What you may gueſſ, but what I spare to name :
 " 'Tis my design to reason, not declaim.
 " Some failures of each kind in men we ſee ;
 " But in one failure the whole ſex agree :
 " In this, they drive at universal fway ;
 " Unbleſt till they command, and we obey.
 " Wrong I the ſex ? By married men be try'd
 " The cauſe." He paus'd for anſwer.—None re-
 ply'd.
 " Yet to your good my quiet I resign,
 " And yield my liberty. Your good is mine.
 " Not born to govern for myself alone,
 " I ever held your int'reſt as my own.
 " Then what you kindly ask, I freely give,
 " And this the laſt and ſureſt proof receive ;
 " This friend or foe ; this good or ill of life ;
 " This ſpecious charge ; this doubtful chance, a wife !

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" But

“ But for the choice; be that our proper care;
“ This mark of duty and affection spare.
“ Nor think it matters aught, whate'er she be,
“ Of rich or poor, of high or low degree;
“ Aught, to the present or succeeding age,
“ What parents for their children can engage?
“ The son or well or ill supports his race,
“ As heav'n directs; the glory or disgrace:
“ Nor vice nor virtue, rightly understood,
“ Descends like titles, running with our blood.
“ Was honour but entail'd upon our kind,
“ No well-born prince could shew a slavish mind.
“ Nought could the seeds of infamy reclaim,
“ No vulgar progeny could rise to fame.
“ Yet say what house observes an equal mean?
“ Where fix'd was vice or virtue ever seen?
“ View sire and son with various souls endu'd;
“ The polish'd fire begets a son as rude.
“ Yet oft the circle ends where it begun,
“ And the rude squire begets a polish'd son.
“ No human care can destiny controul;
“ Superior is the pow'r that guides the whole.
“ From springs unknown are nat'ral talents giv'n;
“ Call it the force of fate, or will of heav'n.

“ Our

" Our lives are subject to divine decrees ;
 " Man only acts as providence foresees.
 " Our part perform'd, let providence prepare
 " (Here all precaution fails) the future heir,
 " Your weal or woe to frustrate or advance :
 " Sprung from what line, you take an equal chance.
 " I too the same resistless law obey,
 " For ev'ry happy or unhappy day.
 " The pains or pleasures of the married state
 " Hang on the same necessity of fate.
 " Yet far as human prudence can secure,
 " There let your common oath my peace ensure.
 " Swear—when in form my plighted hands I bind,
 " (Whate'er the object that shall take my mind)
 " All due obeisance to the chosen maid
 " Be fully shown ; all homage freely paid :
 " Her right acknowledg'd, from the nuptial hour
 " As just, as had she brought the world in dow'r.
 " And further ; be it solemnly agreed,
 " That none in thought, or look, in word, or deed,
 " Or of her fortune grieve, or birth complain.
 " Oppose me here, I hold the treaty vain.
 " This I exact ; and justice this requires :
 " Freedom and peace I yield to your desires ;

“ Resign my body ; so the public voice
 “ Demands ; but never will resign my choice.
 “ Whate’er concerns the state is not withheld ;
 “ Slave I will be, with pleasure, for her good.
 “ Yet as a royal slave my port maintain,
 “ And to my fancy fit the fashion of my chain.”

Affent from all the just proposal bore,
 And solemnly the tender’d oath they swore ;
 Praying, ere yet they took their sev’ral-way,
 To fix the spousal, and affign the day :
 Still dreading that Gualtherus would not wed ;
 For when could subjects find no cause of dread ?

To leave no doubt of his determin’d mind,
 He fix’d the spousal, and the day affign’d :
 Term of his future war, or future rest !
 A chance incur’d (he said) at their request.
 Full low they thank him on their bended knees ;
 For vulgar minds well-tim’d concessions please.
 And home again all merrily they tend ;
 Proud, by their conduct, to have gain’d their end.

Meantime their lord (as marriage form requires)
 Appoints his privy knights, and trusty squires,
 As well for pomp as order to provide,
 To grace the rite, and dignify the bride ;

Strict

Strict charge on every chief attendant lays,
And eager ev'ry chief the charge obeys.
Nor aught was spar'd of service or delight,
To dignify the bride, or grace the rite.

The day appointed for the nuptials came ;
The feast prepar'd ; the Marquis still the same.
Not one the chosen comfort could devise.
Though what escapes the courtier's busy eyes ?
To blame their lord the vulgar much incline ;
So close his speech, so covert his design !
And where they durst, in secret, or alone,
Impeach his good intent, because unknown.
" Slave to his ease (in murmurs thus they said)
" Imagin'd ease ; he still forbears to wed ;
" Our suit, and ev'n his word, forgot the while :
" Why will he thus himself and us beguile ?"

The morning pass'd ; approach'd the noon of day ;
The ev'ning came ; and still the same delay.
No name went round ; no bride appear'd in sight :
Yet were the nuptials fix'd to crown the night.
Ill could the crowd (suspended to despair)
Indure such myst'ry, such delusion bear.
For still the palace seem'd the promis'd word
To keep, and justify its thoughtless lord.

There neat in splendour, pompous in array,
 Each spacious hall and princely chamber lay.
 Rich furniture in costly order plac'd ;
 Never was seat of marriage nobler grac'd.
 Spread ev'ry table ; ev'ry officē stor'd ;
 With delicates to load the bridal board.
 All that the compass of Italian ground
 Could yield, or might in foreign lands be found.
 But why prepar'd ? No mortal could decide :
 For what was bridal pomp without a bride ?

At length appear'd Gualtherus, richly dress'd,
 And dawning hope revives each anxious breast.
 So wand'ring travellers hail the blushing ray,
 That first forebodes the kind return of day.
 And forth he rides : while all the royal court
 Attend ; all bidden to the nuptial sport.
 With many a noble dame of beauty bright,
 And many a sprightly peer, and valiant knight ;
 And all the chosen gentry of the land,
 Common or squire, an honourable band :
 With these, his trusty guard, and household train :
 And manfully their foaming steeds they rein' ;
 Who, snorting to the music's mingled sound,
 Pass to the vales : the neighb'ring hills rebound.

Rumour

Rumour the while their close attention drew,
 And busily from side to side she flew.
 A noted dame attracts their ears and eyes,
 And mingles many truths with many lies :
 A dame, long practis'd in intrigues of court ;
 Early in youth she try'd the am'rous sport ;
 Nor late in age could wholly quit the trade.
 Well could she prompt the half-consenting maid,
 And to the wishing youth sage counsel lend :
 In her each found a most convenient friend.
 Thrown out of play, she overlook'd the game ;
 True friend to love : Bauderia was her name.
 Unask'd though high of rank, she join'd the throng,
 And thus she tattled as she pac'd along.

“ Well ! now the Marquis has reveal'd his mind.
 “ (All hear, on right, on left, before, behind.)
 “ Soon as you pass the wood, and reach the lawn,
 “ Where oft in file the marshal'd troops are drawn,
 “ You from your steeds, fair ladies, must alight,
 “ And single pass review within his sight.
 “ One he will choose. For though he seems to fly,
 “ He loves the sex : you read it in his eye.
 “ Happy the fair, to fix his choice affign'd !
 “ And great his singularity of mind !

" He lays his crown and scepter at her feet,
 " For unexpected good comes doubly sweet.
 " This he devis'd, for he is good as great,
 " In honour to the sex, and to the state ;
 " Nor sought a foreign fair to deck his throne,
 " Proud to display the lustre of his own.
 " This he declar'd the cause of his delay ;
 " Declar'd in council, and declar'd to-day.
 " But 'twas a secret kept by his commands ;
 " I know it to be fact, and from good hands."

From fair to fair the pleasing rumour spread ;
 Hope fills each female heart and female head.
 Daughters of avarice his wealth devour ;
 Swell the ambitious with the thoughts of pow'r ;
 Rank fires the proud, and equipage the vain ;
 But self-opinion seizes all the train.

Hence, fast they fall to scandal and surmise ;
 As who might claim, but who must lose the prize :
 And strait each beauty ev'ry beauty nam'd ;
 And ev'ry beauty strait each beauty blam'd.
 The mart of female censure knows no glut ;
 Bring what you will, they tax it with a *but*.
 While thus, in scrutiny, all sentence all :—
 Daphne is handsome ; but she is too tall !

And

id honestly to judge 'twixt friend and foe,
lvia is pretty ; but as much too low !
elia, men say, is fashion'd for a wife ;
it sure it is a piece of mere still life !
id Chloe affable, she knows no pride ;
it is she not too free, or much bely'd ?
ninta has a voice, divine to hear ;
it then a mouth that gapes from ear to ear !
id Amarillis has a world of fire ;
it then a tongue that Socrates would tire !
avia has beauty ; but her look is mean !
i think, my dear, how she would act the queen !
id Myra, dignity of voice and air ;
t, oh ! the colour of her teeth and hair !
ivia is delicate ; but then too lean,
living corpse ! half malady, half spleen !
id, full of health Nerina, 'tis confess ;
t 'tis a beast of burthen at the best !
ture in Phillis made not one mistake ;
t she is young ; who knows what she may make ?
id Phœbus in Serpilla's eyes may shine ;
t you will grant 'tis Phœbus in decline !
ie only charm of Sapho is her mind ;
t to get lovers she must lift the blind !

And

And Glaura's only merit is her shape ;
 But if you are not deaf, you must escape !
 Cælia—(scarce envy here a fault could spy)
 Yes, 'tis not seen, but Cælia is awry !
 Not one was worthy (for, the truth to own,
 Each priz'd herself) or of his bed or throne.
 And well I ween, were they to choose the wife,
 Full long the prince might lead a fingle life.

Meantime in royal pomp, and proud array,
 Along the dale Gualtherus shap'd his way,
 To where a low but cleanly village stood,
 Wash'd by a stream, and border'd by a wood ;
 Of homely cots compos'd ; for such as fed
 The fleecy kind, or lowing oxen bred ;
 For such as mow'd the meads, or plow'd the fields,
 And liv'd on what industrious labour yields.

Here, lov'd by all, an honest rustic dwell'd,
 Of all the poorer swains the poorest held ;
 Blest with a soul superior to his fate :
 For all his wish was suited to his state.
 Here in this narrow circle could he find,
 What not the world can give, content of mind ;
 But yet what all may on themselves bestow ;
 And here it left the high to be the low ;

The

The princely palace for the oxen stall.

Him good Janicola the neighbours call.

A daughter crown'd his age, of spotless fame,
Though noted form; Griselda was her name.

A fairer not the journeying sun surveys,
Or with his rising, or his falling rays.

A chaster never happy mother bore,

In days of present, or in days of yore.

Strict in her duty, faithful to her trust,

She shunn'd temptation, specious lure to lust.

Yet, far as virtue may, she sought to please;

And honest toil preferr'd to dang'rous ease.

Of diet temp'rate, cautious of excess,

Drank oft'ner of the spring than of the press.

For wine adds fuel to the tender breast;

The springs of youth not motion want, but rest.

Wisely she shunn'd all adventitious heat:

Simple her dress, but yet, though simple, neat.

Though blest of face, and of a tender age,

She would not be engag'd, nor would engage.

Free from the dart of love she kept her heart,

Nor yet at others strove to throw the dart.

Such swains as sought her father's voice to gain,

In birth not soul her equals, met disdain.

Base

Base commerce with superiors she declin'd,
 For conscious worth sat scepter'd in her mind.
 Her aged father was her tend'rest care,
 His failing nature studious to repair ;
 And oft his life her diligence repriev'd,
 Repaying back the breath she had receiv'd.
 And next to that her duty was to keep,
 Nor great the charge, his scanty flock of sheep :
 And forth she led them, soon as day begun ;
 And home she drove them, with the setting sun.
 Then was she wont with filial joy to bring,
 Whate'er produc'd the summer, or the spring,
 Of herbs, or fruits ; what autumn might afford,
 Or winter spare, to spread the frugal board.
 In household thrift she spent each vacant hour,
 Arm'd against pleasure, for she fear'd the pow'r.
 Hence no false bait could her chaste heart entice :
 For sloth she counted the first step to vice.

Her, as he used to cross the neighb'ring green,
 Gualtherus joy'd to see, and oft had seen.
 Her matchless beauty took his wand'ring sight,
 And hap'ly minister'd unknown delight.
 'Twas the first dawn of passion in his breast ;
 And neither settled care, nor total rest.

More

More frequent came he here, the various game
To rouse ; nor knew himself why here he came.
'Twas thought the near adjacence of the place,
The country round commodious for the chace,
Still to this spot his course inclines and draws ;
Or any thing beside the real cause.
Yet hither when he led the sportive train,
A secret pleasure thrill'd in ev'ry vein ;
But if averse he turn'd the flying prey,
Tedious the course, and joyless was the day.
Next, as she charm'd his eye, she charm'd his ear ;
'Twas sweet delight her modest voice to hear ;
The native language of an artless mind,
Unpractis'd in the trains of womankind.
Oft by design he from the crowd would stray,
And oft pretend occasions of delay ;
Loss of the sport ; or, failure of his horse ;
And tempt her to more free, but chaste discourse.
Still pleas'd (whate'er she said, whate'er declin'd)
In humble state exalted worth to find,
And note each decent look, and just reply,
With glad attention, but with watchful eye :
Watchful, lest ev'n to distant view betray'd,
Envy might wrong the inoffensive maid.

Prudential

Prudential cares the best affection prove ;
No vanity he knew, nor yet knew love.
Sincere regard protects the fair from blame ;
Hence what he priz'd, he dreaded to defame.
Then, home as he returns, his thoughts retrace
Her winning innocence, her bashful grace,
Her pious care, her unaffected mien,
(Beauties in courtly dames too rarely seen)
Her form, not spoil'd by art, by nature wrought ;
And far above her sex her manly thought ;
No poverty of language to express ;
No, nought of poverty but in her dress.
Thus homeward musing was he wont to ride ;
And thus himself, himself unknowing, try'd.
“ Blest is the swain, that to his faithful breast
“ This virgin joins, could marriage make him blest.
“ Yes, I will own, was I reduc'd to wed,
“ Or fear'd not, more than death, that bondage bed,
“ None but Griselda would I choose for wife :
“ But ah ! what woman answers slavish life ?
“ Not for the cause, the many may misguide,
“ That in our ancient ancestry I pride ;
“ And rather than their dignity disgrace,
“ Would torture nature, than demean my race.
“ Though

" Though this be common sene, 'tis without
 ground ;
 " Sense is by truth, not by opinion bound.
 " Much fashion'd vice from false opinion springs ;
 " But lasting virtue from the truth of things.
 " Let vulgar souls the worldly worth define,
 " Of hoarded wealth, or long-continued line ;
 " With me, to be well-born, is to be good ;
 " And merit, the pure stream of noble blood.
 " But whither would these wild conclusions drive ?
 " To where I neither tend nor can arrive.
 " Full happy may the maid (where'er her fate
 " Bestows her) make, and find that casual state ;
 " A bliss, so dear the price, by me unsought :
 " An idle question, and a wand'ring thought !"

Thus would he war, to strong mistrust inclin'd,
 'Twixt sene of love, and prejudice of mind.
 But now, to quit his boasted peace constrain'd,
 Now, that no hope of liberty remain'd ;
 These barriers of his passion once remov'd,
 With rapture he reflects on her he lov'd.
 Then the fair object, rooted in his breast,
 Stood forth, in all the pow'r of fancy drest.

So the pent stream, obstructed in his course,
 The dams o'erthrown, pours with redoubled force.
 So the tam'd steed with fury scours the plain,
 When from the curbing hand he snaps the rein.

Meantime the maid, full innocent of mind,
 Nor knew the smother'd flame; nor grace design'd.
 With snow-white pail she sought the silver spring,
 Thence nature's pure munificence to bring;
 Or for her own, or for her father's need:
 And home return'd with more than wonted speed.
 For now she heard her rustic neighbours say,
 Her lord would wed, and this the promis'd day.
 And though gay sport was not her fond delight,
 Full fain would she have seen this courtly sight.

For this, with haste she bears the limpid freight,
 Nor dreamt, how near she verg'd on better fate;
 How soon to change her cottage for a throne;
 And celebrate no nuptial but her own.
 She but propos'd to end without delay
 The household labours of the short'ning day;
 Then at her homely gate resolv'd to stand,
 And with her equals view the royal band;
 While to the lawn their splendid course they hold:
 As swains returning from Saluzzo told.

Yet

Yet something here she found, nor yet could find
The cause, that pain'd her heart, and griev'd her
mind;

Something, that seem'd to trouble and perplex:

Envy, you'll say, insep'rate from the sex:

A virtuous envy still, and well refin'd:

Corrected vice, uncommon to the kind.

'Twas not, that others' pleasure gave her pain;

'Twas not, that his regard had made her vain;

Nor malice to the bride, to her unknown;

Yet could she wish her any other throne.

Gualtherus too, her innocence confess'd,

She could not wish debas'd, to have posses'd.

But had, revers'd, their distance been as great;

His low as hers, and high as his her state;

His worth, she inly thought, had fix'd her choice;

No pow'r or wealth had brib'd her partial voice.

His steed Gualtherus quitting at the gate

Gave to a squire, and bade th' attendants wait.

Scarce had he enter'd, when Griselda came,

At distance known: he call'd her by her name.

She down her pail beside the oxen stall

Hastens to depose, and on her knees to fall:

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And

And thus in humble guise continues still,
As one that waits to hear the royal will.

Though fix'd all sign of passion to withstand,
Forward he stepp'd, and rais'd her with his hand:
While all, that of her innocence or truth
He fram'd, or of her beauty felt, or youth,
Fell short, to what his present thoughts admire ;
Her eyes so full of modesty, yet fire !
The discomposure of her face and frame,
Blushing and trembling with ingenuous shame !
“ Say—is—Janicola ?”—His tongue affords
Uneasy utt'rance to these easy words.
And, cover'd with confusion as she stands,
“ He—is (she cries) he waits—his lord’s commands.”
Within the homely cot not long she sought,
And to his lord her ancient father brought,
Him by the hand he takes, and leads aside ;
Then thus : “ In me, Janicola, confide.
“ My faithful vassal wert thou wont to rest ;
“ Nor let the father with the prince contest.
“ No longer will I boast the pow’r or art,
“ To check my will, or to disguise my heart :
“ Thy daughter, chaste of fame as fair of sight,
“ I claim, but would not claim by force but right.”

On

On earth the honest rustic fix'd his eyes,
 Shock'd with mistrust, astonish'd with surprise :
 At length he rais'd, unable to controul
 The pow'r of virtue working in his soul :
 " My sov'reign liege, oh ! pardon (he reply'd) :
 " To serve you, was my joy ; to please, my pride ;
 " To please you, and to serve you, as I ought.
 " But sure my ignorance mistakes your thought !
 " If my Griselda may some merit claim,
 " She should not pass through infamy to fame.
 " Not such my early care, not such appears
 " Her cautious youth : she will not wrong my years ;
 " Nor wrong her own. Thought daughter of a swain,
 " And bred in want, she lives without a stain.
 " And may I, of thy slaves the meanest slave,
 " Ere virtue she forsake, prepare her grave.
 " Here, in this narrow compass, fortune grants
 " Sufficient for her wishes and my wants ;
 " Sufficient yields our flock, though small our fold,
 " To guard both her and me from heat and cold.
 " The stream gives liquor, and the forest fire.
 " Possess we little ? Little we desire.
 " Ev'n this to your benevolence we owe ;
 " But rather re-assume what you bestow,

“ Than we from simple honesty depart,
 “ And know a mind corrupt, or vicious heart.
 “ Still may we live in innocence and ease,
 “ Pleas’d with our charge, nor basely seek to please.
 “ And, if so far a father may presume,
 “ Bear her to court, you bear her to her tomb.”

The pleasure that from virtuous action flows,

The man of virtue only feels and knows.

Gualtherus own’d a joy that rose to pain,

To find so worthy, yet so poor a swain.

He smil’d; and to himself in secret sport:

“ Few had return’d this negative at court.”

Then to Janicola: “ My fair design.

“ Mistake not, friend. By right I claim her mine;

“ With me (consent but thou) to lead her life,

“ Not, as you wrong my sense, but as my wife.”

Mute with amaze, and with confusion red,

“ Thy will be mine,” was all the father said.

Gualtherus strait, pursuing his intent,

Within the lowly cot full humbly went;

The bashful maid he bade approach him nigh;

(All this he will’d beneath the father’s eye).

Surpris’d she stood with wonder and delight,

For never had she seen so fair a sight:

And

And unaccustom'd to so great a guest,
Pale grew her cheek, and much disturb'd her breast.

He mark'd the sweet disorder of the maid,
And thus completes the plan, maturely laid.

“ Griselda, know, my purpose is to wed,
“ And make thee partner of my throne and bed.

“ Thy father yields consent our hands to join ;
“ What more remains but to solicit thine ?

“ Aught need I add ? The offer shews my love ;
“ And time, I hope, thy constancy will prove.

“ All that I ask, is quietly to live.

“ Then freely give, what only you can give.

“ The match, 'tis true, too much of haste requires ;
“ Your thoughts I know not, though I feel my fires.

“ To speak my passion, or thy truth to try,

“ Time fails ; then let me add this further tie :

“ Swear, that with ready will, and honest heart,

“ Like or dislike, without regret or art,

“ In presence, or alone, by night or day,

“ All that I will, you fail not to obey ;

“ All I intend, to forward that you seek,

“ Nor ever once object to what I speak.

“ Nor yet in part alone my wish fulfil ;

“ Nor, though you do it, do it with ill-will ;

“ Nor with a forc’d compliance half refuse ;

“ And acting duty, all the merit lose.

“ To strict obedience add a willing grace,

“ And let your soul be painted on your face.

“ No reasons giv’n, and no pretences sought,

“ To swerve in deed or word, in look or thought.”

Hard terms, I doubt, may judge the modern maid ;

Marriage dear-bought ! and grandeur overpaid !

Not so Griselda. And observe her life,

All that the maid propos’d, perform’d the wife.

“ How much thy vassal falls below thy care,”

(This just reply she made with modest air)

“ I own ; in indigence begot and bred :

“ Stain to thy race, dishonour to thy bed !

“ This known, was neither oath nor vow to bind,

“ What honest heart could stray, what virtuous mind ?

“ Had fortune join’d me to the meanest swain,

“ That tends your lowing herd, or bleating train,

“ Him to obey had been my choice in life ;

“ The meanest swain had found a faithful wife.

“ Thus honour’d, ill I merited to live,

“ Gave I not that which only I can give ;

“ What ev’ry slave might claim. But if those eyes

“ Have found aught here to prize, myself I prize :

“ Mindful

" Mindful to whom I owe my happier fate ;
 " Nor yet forgetful of my former state.
 " Sense of your worth, and gratitude conspire
 " To firm this bond ; I swear, as you require :
 " Still to remain observant of your will,
 " Your ev'ry charge religiously fulfil ;
 " By that sole rule my future life to lead :
 " Nor swerve in thought or look, in word or deed."
 " No other dower I ask (Gualtherus cry'd) :
 " The world should tempt me to no other bride."
 Then led her to the door : and thus aloud
 Accosts the menial and the noble crowd :
 " Here, on this seat of hope, I rest my life ;
 " This maid, and none but her, I take to wife.
 " To this, my better part, that homage show,
 " All that you owe your prince, or think you owe."

The ladies then he bade reform her dress,
 (Retir'd within the cot's remote recess)
 And richly deck, as princely rites require,
 Nor leave one remnant of her old attire ;
 Resolv'd, that ere she reach'd the royal gate,
 Her bridal pomp should suit her wisely state :
 Her mind so noble, and her form so fair,
 First fix'd his choice ; and last requir'd his care.

In flock the fair, to dress the rural maid,
On nuptials pleas'd to lend their useful aid :
Some mov'd by duty ; by good nature some :
Some meditating marriages to come ;
And ruminating some on pleasures past :
Some curious, and some envious : most, the last.
But all, on entrance, loud surprise express'd,
To see the courtly bride so country dress'd.
For nobly born, and delicately bred,
Her rude apparel rais'd a gen'ral dread.
Such linen, never felt ! seen garments such !
So rough ! so coarse ! they almost swoon to touch.
Deep-principled in vain affected airs,
Of framing fears, and counterfeiting cares ;
Of feigning woe, where they rejoice at heart ;
And pain dissembling, where they feel no smart ;
Not one less horror witness'd than the rest,
Not one so low, as not to seem distrest.
Each, as the painful office they pursue,
Oft gave her injur'd hand, and oft withdrew ;
Oft turn'd her head, ev'n in Griselda's sight,
Lest other dames might think her less polite,
Unless some sign of censure she had shown,
That any thing so dress'd should mount a throne :

Then

Then sends the speedy embassage of eyes,
To prove her taste, and witness her surprise ;
Then, starting back, her supple body bends,
As if infection the vile work attends.

For softer tasks their polish'd limbs were made ;
This was mere drudg'ry ! mere mechanic trade !
Ill could their whiter fingers bear the soil ;
Or weaker arms support the grievous toil.

“ But this the prince—and he is free to choose,
“ And none in common manners can refuse.”

This vast fatigue with mighty pain subdued,
More easy was the charge that next ensued.
The sight of rich apparel glads the fair,
Fond to admire, though destin'd not to wear !

For now more sumptuous clothes th' attendants
brought,

In secret, by their lord's direction wrought ;
Shap'd to the fairest maiden of the court :
(The measure gaily taken as in sport)
Cælia the maid ; alike her turn and size.
Such just observers still are lovers' eyes !

Full well each fashion'd dame performs her part ;
Skill'd in the myst'ries of the toilet art.

By

By each some happy master-stroke was shwon,
The flowing robe adjusting by her own.
Rich was the robe, and glorious to behold,
Beset with costly stones incas'd in gold;
The plainer ground of pure cerulean dye ;
And oft the hand was stopp'd to feast the eye.
Her hair they comb'd, that rudely lay untress'd,
But soon reclaim'd, and in new order dress'd :
And store they had of adventitious charms,
Rings for the hands, and bracelets for the arms ;
With pearly rows, with golden bands was grac'd
The rising bosom, and the falling waist ;
And last a crown was plac'd upon her head,
That prominent with gems a mingled lustre shed.

Patient beneath their hands Griselda sits,
And to their various wills her limbs submits ;
But secret wish'd less pomp had been prepar'd,
And much of their polite exactnes spar'd.
The vain with sudden change are soon elate ;
The stupid have no relish of their fate :
The two extremes she wisely steer'd between ;
Her rule of action was the golden mean.
She nor with idiot-laugh her bliss proclaims,
Nor with vain triumph treats the courtly dames ;

Not

Not though she saw her fortune only vex :
She mild forgave the failure of the sex.
And yet not senseless of her good remains ;
But rising pleasure prudently restrains.
The wise their bliss in contemplation find ;
Joy is not of the tongue, but of the mind.
Yet oft with quicker throbs her bosom rose,
And oft her face with warmer blushes glows ;
And softer smiles to paint her lips arise,
And brighter rays to animate her eyes.
The fair themselves, that joint assistance lend,
Not apt the charms of others to command,
With looks of silent praise, alternate thrown,
Well nigh prefer her beauty to their own.
Who (still improv'd beneath their forming hands)
At once their love and their respect commands.
But loud applause (produc'd in publick view)
The vulgar add, still fond of what is new !
Transform'd (they thought) a new Griselda shown :
Slaves to appearance, not transform'd but known !
Not such material change their lord confess'd,
Who bore her fairer image in his breast ;
Who not by outward show her form survey'd,
And more her merit than her beauty weigh'd.

Yet,

Yet, for he knew that dress improves the face,
(As eloquence to sense adds better grace)

Her just adornment gratify'd his sight,
Pleas'd to behold her in the fairest light.

He on her hands, uprais'd with decent shame,
Affix'd the ring, that binds the nuptial claim ;
Then on a snow-white steed the virgin plac'd,
With crimson reins and silver trappings grac'd.
Loud shout the coming and returning throng,
As to the royal court they pass along ;
In revel there the finish'd day he spends ;
Till down the western steeps the sun descends.

But not on things minute to dwell too long—
(For copious is the remnant of our song)
The new-made bride with such true merit shone,
She gave (not borrow'd) lustre from the throne.
So form'd her speech, so fashion'd was her mien ;
So just, but mild ! so awful, but serene !
Not envy in her look or soul could trace
Her low condition or ignoble race.
In nought she seem'd by rustic parents fed,
In meanness nurtur'd, or in rudeness bred ;
No daughter of a cottage humbly born,
But sprung a princely palace to adorn ;

Nor

Nor only to adorn, but to support ;
Not only fill, but dignify a court.

Her spreading fame the crowd with wonder hears,
(Who knew her birth) and scarce believe their ears ;
Gaze the nobility with like surprise,
And doubt the nearer evidence of eyes.

For though her lowly virtue was the same,
Exalted thus it shew'd a brighter flame.

Virtue lies undiscover'd when confin'd,
Unfelt the will, unless the power be join'd.
Her known example may this truth declare,
So witty, yet so wise ; so chaste, yet fair !

So strictly merciful, so humbly great !

Such winning grace, and such complying state !

Her looks their love, her words their wonder won,
Diffus'd on all, indulgent as the sun !

Not only through Saluzzo spread her fame,
But distant regions heard her bounteous name ;
And ever lavish on her praises dwell :

Well as one spoke, another spoke as well.

And thousands came, alike the young as old,
Women as men, to hear her and behold.

Thus honesty for once and honour wed,
And humble fortune decks a princely bed.

The

The disbelieving lord himself confess'd,
 'Twas possible in marriage to be blest.
 At home his peace preserv'd the prudent wife,
 Abroad his wealth supply'd the wants of life;
 And more than life requires. For kept from waste,
 Enough remains for elegance of taste.
 And for that worth, through poverty's disguise,
 Discern'd their lord, the people held him wife.
 This as no common incident be told;
 'Tis what the people are not apt to hold.

Yet not in household cares (though these alone
 Are worthy praise) her excellence was shown:
 Absent her lord, full wisely could she guide
 The public state, the common good provide:
 In judgment equal, easy of access,
 Complaints to hear, or errors to redress;
 And ready, as successful, to assuage,
 Or private discontent, or public rage.
 Of counsel prudent, steady to her trust,
 Strong in persuasion, in discernment just:
 And when at strife (for strife all states afford)
 She reconcil'd the people to their lord;
 So sought his peace, and so their welfare sought,
 Urg'd with such pow'r of speech, and strength of
 thought,

That

That rarely was her judgment found to fail :
And if he held the sword, she held the scale.
Hence all degrees, the senate and the crowd,
Her justice own'd, her clemency allow'd ;
A gift of heav'n their fortune to attend,
Not only to preserve the state, but mend.

Blest was the subject, and the sov'reign blest ;
All shar'd her worth, he all her worth posses'd.
Nor yet the sun had fill'd his annual round,
Ere a new pledge of love the nuptials crown'd :
A daughter crown'd ; whose sweetly-op'ning face
Adorn'd the bed with near-resembling grace.
And though (the better to reward her care)
The anxious mother wish'd a manly heir ;
Pleas'd was Gualtherus, nor displeas'd the state,
To find their wishes half indulg'd by fate :
For, from that sample of inferior kind,
The promise of a nobler—they divin'd.

The charge Griselda, mistress of a throne,
Entrusted to no care, beside her own.
Gualtherus long oppos'd, at length comply'd,
Dissenting most from love, but much from pride.
No matrimonial jar ! for here the strife
Was not to burthen, but to spare the wife.

He

He prefis'd their common dignity and ease,
 And yielded but to humour, and to please.
 Yet she maintain'd (her argument was strong)
 " Whole nature bias'd to preserve their young.
 " Of all the habitants of earth and air,
 " Shall human kind take less than savage care ?
 " I own (she said) this seems a country strain,
 " The language of the daughter of a swain;
 " What to the crowd may furnish mirth and sport,
 " And give distaste and wonder to the court.
 " Yet will I say (for this you taught my youth)
 " *Trust not to show of things, but to the truth.*
 " Be truth the rule; polite or impolite,
 " I weigh not what is thought, but what is right.
 " The point let courtly dames with leave contest:
 " This lovely child shall never quit my breast.
 " 'Tis vice of fashion; 'tis neglect of kind;
 " 'Tis indolence; 'tis cruelty of mind."

To such a husband added such a wife;
 What fairer scene could yield domestic life ?
 Each seems of each the fortune to controul,
 Each worthy each in body as in soul.
 So fair the road, and so direct to bliss,
 Their way a pair so form'd could hardly miss;

Unless

Unless with open eyes they go astray,
And wilfully their fated joy betray.
And so it chanc'd ; to plain conviction blind,
Gualtherus makes the ill he could not find.
Though never had she shock'd his ear or sight,
No woman could be always in the right.
This was his pain ; to strong mistrust inclin'd,
No proof could turn the bias of his mind.
But where to fix a fault he seem'd distrest :
Was ever husband so severely prest ?
First for her beauty ; that was free from blame ;
Nature ne'er fashion'd a completer frame !
Next for her mind ; that gave him less pretence ;
Nought but her wit was equal to her sense !
Then o'er her virtue quick his scruples run ;
Fair as the light, and spotless as the sun !
Her duty last he weighs ; no failure past
Appears : yet restless there he settles last.
Her former conduct was not void of praise ;
But never was she put to hard assays.
Perhaps 'twas indolence ; perhaps 'twas art ;
Int'rest or fear : she acted well her part :
Content in trivial things is easy shwon ;
Obedience by the proof is only known.

To vain disquiet of their common lives,
Thus tyrant-husbands tempt their subject-wives :
Full unadvis'd we deem ; some think full wise :
But obvious (duly judge) the error lies.
Mischances numberless, to cause debate
On either side, affords the various state ;
This want to aggravate, that sense to vex.
The lesson we apply to either sex.
Some heedless word or action may offend,
Speak ne'er so kind, and ne'er so just intend ;
Whence noise and strife, mistrust, aversion springs ;
Add here the common casualty of things.
Each to the other by alliance bound,
But then each borders on the other's ground.
On truce howe'er let marriage-warfare cease ;
Act not hostilities in time of peace.
Till provocation raises fresh alarms,
Let neither rouse the bosom foe to arms.
When safe ashore, thy shatter'd bark repair ;
The gale of Hymen blows not always fair.
Pierce not in wanton sport her weaker fides ;
Enough has she to bear from winds and tides.
If then those ills, that neither can prevent,
Wives suffer patient ; husbands, live content.

Alone

Alone by night, where lay the royal dame,
With visage sternly-sad Gualtherus came ;
Whom in unwonted terms he thus address'd :
“ Grifelda, say, retains thy faithful breast
“ Some just remembrance of that golden-day,
“ When first I threw your rural weeds away ;
“ And with more fitting pomp and splendour grac'd ?
“ Or, say, has time the grateful thought eras'd ?
“ And dignity, by use familiar grown,
“ Made thee o'erlook the cottage in the throne ?
“ Yet not so many glorious months have run,
“ Since this thy new-created pow'r begun.
“ Review thyself, and by reflection know,
“ High as you stand, that once you stood as low.
“ 'Tis thine this grace with duty to requite :
“ For that, I chose the silence of the night,
“ Safe from each list'ning ear and prying eye,
“ Thy constancy to prove, thy truth to try ;
“ Pay you just faith, or feign'd regard pretend.
“ Then know my will, and strict attention lend.
“ E'er since the day that first preferr'd you here,
“ Not by thyself thy life was held more dear :
“ Part of my own ! but far the better part !
“ You shar'd not more my fortune than my heart.

" Not such the love you from the subject claim,
 " Grievous they think the load, and great the shame;
 " Uprais'd from humble state thy worth to see,
 " (Thy worth unknown) uprais'd to high degree;
 " Begot in slav'ry; in a cottage born;
 " Their private laughter, and their secret scorn!
 " But ever since that hapless child you bore,
 " Loud are their plaints, not wholly dumb before.
 " My rule in ills, is still to make the best,
 " (Some ease may follow, if not total rest)
 " And press, or yield, ambitious of repose,
 " Just as the tide of faction ebbs or flows.
 " Thy daughter now (and since the child was born
 " Not thrice the moon renew'd her silver horn)
 " Thy daughter now their tumult must appease—
 " Not as I would—but as my people please.
 " How loath to act the deed, bear witness heav'n!—
 " Nor will I act—unless your voice be giv'n.—
 " An equal share you claim.—But fully know—
 " (And here your wonted soul, Griselda, show)
 " Know, your concurrence is my stated will!
 " Yield, and by deed your plighted word fulfil:
 " Act what you swore upon our marriage-day:
 " Mine then was to command, your office to obey."

She

She all unmov'd the hard condition hears ;
 Nor aught concern'd in look or thought appears.
 No change his strict enquiring eyes could read,
 Much less oppos'd she or in word or deed :
 But said : " My child, myself too I resign :
 " Dispose at will, my lord : your will is mine.
 " In you just property of either lies ;
 " And either, for your good, or lives, or dies.
 " My soul (as love and gratitude require)
 " Likes what you like, desires what you desire.
 " Beside yourself nought else is left to choose ;
 " And nought beside yourself she dreads to lose.
 " This (by your grace since first our hands were join'd)
 " Has been her first fix'd principle of mind.
 " This neither change nor fortune can displace ;
 " Nor length of time, nor fear of death deface."

Pleas'd was Gualtherus against nature's laws.
 Could pleasure spring from such an odious cause ?
 Prepost'rous joy ! by virtue not refin'd ;
 Unworthy of himself or human-kind.
 Yet long his thoughts seem'd with themselves at strife,
 As doubtful to pronounce for death or life :
 Then, as resolv'd, a pensive leave he took ;
 Disturb'd his gait, determin'd was his look.

Thence sped, a messenger of death he sought,
To whom he full reveal'd his secret thought ;
Before prepar'd, at distance due to stand,
And strictly execute his lord's command.

Much on his faith and oft had he rely'd ;
But in less sanguinary service try'd.

Whate'er the order giv'n, he spar'd no pain,
For from his diligence accru'd his gain :
When need or danger call'd, was ever near,
From love or duty, from respect or fear ;
The greater the attempt, the bolder still ;
And there is but one step from bold to ill.

Strait to the chamber where Griselda lay,
Commission'd by his lord, he took his way ;
And, sternly turning from the infant maid,
Humanely as his nature could, he said :
“ Displease the act, necessity may plead
“ Excuse ; not choice, but force exacts the deed.
“ And well the wife Griselda understands,
“ That royal mandates claim obedient hands.
“ Much may we grieve the while, and long complain ;
“ But to object, or to resist, is vain ;
“ 'Tis loss of time, 'tis sorrow thrown away :
“ The sooner eas'd, the sooner we obey.

“ Such

“ Such is my fate ; commanded by my lord
 “ To seize this chil'd.”—He seiz'd her at the word.
 The tender infant, innocent of harm,
 Smiles on his griesly beard, and hugs his boist'rous
 arm.

To few such energy of soul is giv'n,
 As shew'd Griselda ; 'twas the gift of heav'n.
 At once she summon'd every pow'r of mind,
 And stood the stress ; foreboding, but resign'd.
 The man she knew ; suspicious was his name :
 Suspicious was his office and his fame :
 Nor less suspicioius was the time and place ;
 But more suspicious still his speech and face.
 What she must feel (the wretch so arm'd and dreſt)
 Is easier to be fancy'd, than expref's'd :
 All that the prince in dubious words let fall,
 All that reflection could to mind recal,
 Seem'd true : (her apprehension wrong or right)
 All that she fear'd, seem'd acted in her sight.
 A bloody ſcene of innocence diſtreſt !
 An infant torn, and murder'd, from her breast !
 An infant, by her hourly tendance fed !
 Sweet inmate of her chamber and her bed !

Add here, just cause of horror and affright,
 The silence and the darkness of the night !
 The strange neglect of him her soul approv'd,
 The man she honour'd, and the man she lov'd.
 To crown the whole, this ruffian guard appears ;
 Who can conceive it without sighs or tears ?
 Black were his locks, and nigh upright they stood ;
 Smear'd were his hands, as exercis'd in blood.
 But, to do justice to the virtuous tale,
 Supply in mind, where I in language fail ;
 Think by the wife and mother what was borne,
 By duty there, here by affection torn ;
 And be the strife, if not describ'd, conceiv'd :
 'Tis scarce to be imagin'd, or believ'd.
 Yet, as recorded rolls the fact relate,
 She bore the storm, collected and sedate ;
 And since her lord had doom'd the child to die,
 Nor from her bosom stole one stifled sigh,
 Nor from her eye escap'd one secret tear ;
 Though never mother held a child more dear.
 The messenger of death she mildly pray'd
 To reach the child ; whom on her lap she laid ;
 And gently begg'd, " Ere yet her sentence past,
 " One kiss she might bestow, since 'twas the last."

Then

Then with such firmness, as no tongue can tell,
" Farewel, my child, she said ; my child, farewell !
" Full long a flight thy thoughtless soul must take,
" Constrain'd to suffer for thy mother's sake."

A state so woful who could see or hear,
Without a social figh, or friendly tear ?
What nurse, that turns her tendance to a trade ?
What mean domestic ? mercenary maid ?
Well might the suff'ring mother feel distres !
Yet no concern her looks or words expreſſ.
So strongly love and gratitude could bind !
And such her force and her command of mind !

She to the guard, whose aspect horror bred,
" Here, take thy little charge," compos'dly said ;
" Go ! act thy office, as thy lord commands.
" Yes, royal mandates claim obedient hands.
" And what is his desire, is my content :
" Yet, with his leave (nor will he here difſent),
" Depose her body in ſome ſacred place ;
" Where neither birds may touch, nor beasts deface."

To this, no word the ruffian deign'd to ſay ;
But feiz'd the child, and ſternly ſtalg'd away.

Strait to his lord the messenger repair'd,
And faithfully what he obſerv'd declar'd ;

And,

And, far as tenderneſs could touch his breast,
 Told all, he thought, ſhe ſuffer'd, or expreſſ'd.
 Gualtherus, who esteem'd him plain, but juſt,
 In the recital loses his diſtruct :
 Till, fresh poſſeſſion, prejudice regain'd ;
 “ Go, execute (he cries) as I ordain'd.
 “ Convey the child.”—A trial ſo ſevere
 Sure mother never felt ; as you ſhall hear.
 Ev'n though his heart, inclining to relent,
 Oft ſeem'd to diſapprove it, and repent ;
 Firm he maintain'd his ſettled purpoſe ſtill,
 And, as the great are wont, would have his will.

The part affign'd, at forfeiſt of his life,
 The guard performs. Gualtherus ſeeks his wife,
 Fulliſt imagining, in ſecret thought,
 Or in her looks to ſee ſome strangeneſs wrought,
 Or ſome conuſion in her words confeſt ;
 But ſmooth he found her brow, and calm her breast :
 Collected in herſelf ſhe reſts ſedate ;
 Nor fweli'd with high, nor funk with adverſe fate :
 Submiſſ and cheerful, as ſhe wont to prove ;
 In duty faithful, diligent in love :
 Unchang'd her turn of ſpeech and bent of mind ;
 Wit, as agreeable ; diucreet, as kind :

Nor

Nor mention'd once her tongue her daughter's name ;
 A loss she could not praise, but would not blame.
 Hence the fourth sun had fill'd the year complete,
 And vary'd the due change of cold and heat.
 Unchang'd to her the varying seasons run ;
 With peace concludes the day, with joy begun.
 The only cause that could disturb her breast,
 Was that she found Gualtherus ill at rest.
 A child he wish'd. Nor could Griselda find,
 Why that unvalu'd wish should pain his mind.
 So free to part with what was in his pow' ;
 Yet now he counted every day an hour.
 At length heav'n gratify'd his full desire ;
 And doubly bles'd the mother and the sire.
 A son was born. All hail the hopeful boy ;
 Their common safety, and their common joy !
 All, that their country love, and faction hate ;
 All, that wish'd well to sov'reign, or to state.
 Unfruitful deem'd the wife, the daughter dead ;
 The want of issue new commotion bred.
 The next ally'd in diff'rent parts 'divide,
 And draw the giddy crowd on ev'ry side.
 Pride and ambition no occasion lose,
 To feast on heirless crowns with eager views ;

While

While fuel ev'ry neighb'ring pòw'r supplies,
 And blows the blaze in hopes to reap the prize.
 When now a son appear'd, oppos'd to all,
 The factious from their high pretensions fall.
 This turn their pride, if not their cause, befriends ;
 Each ends the contest where his rival ends.
 The loyal joy'd to see the tumult cease ;
 A firm foundation laid for lasting peace ;
 All disagreeing int'rests reconcil'd,
 And hail'd with kind presage the royal child.
 Lovely the child, and manly to behold ;
 Mild as his mother, as his father bold.

Scarce the third year began with full repose,
 When, to disturb the calm, Gualtherus rose ;
 Hapless in this, that happy was his life ;
 Again must he assay the patient wife.
 Capricious husband, to conviction blind !
 What proof could fix that doubtful turn of mind ?
 If long experience but augments your care,
 Must man provoke, and woman ever bear ?
 Survey the state of wedlock at a view,
 A case so strange who ever heard or knew ?
 The husband lives dissatisfy'd in thought,
 Because the wife lives guiltless of a fault.

Tempt

Tempt her he must ; full vainly, dare I say :
 Men keep no bounds, where women will obey.
 Imperious most to those that most endure :
 Such he : but patience is a sov'reign cure.

When night had spread her sable umbrage round,
 Griselda hanging o'er her boy he found.

“ Know (he began) but this thyself must know—
 “ Thy marriage has produc'd a world of woe.
 “ The subject ill our first affiance took,
 “ With lying voice, and counterfeited look.
 “ A daughter born, they lessen'd their disguise ;
 “ Their spleen arose apparent in their eyes :
 “ A son, their open malice kept no bound ;
 “ And on the mother their distaste they found.
 “ 'Tis true, not yet the clamour strikes our ear,
 “ With terror yet the bad report I hear.
 “ Though, ill or well, the prince observes his trust ;
 “ Faction is dang'rous, or unjust or just.
 “ What slav'ry (thus the disaffected cry)
 “ Attends Saluzzo, should Gualtherus die !
 “ Then shall Janicola's mean blood succeed,
 “ His base-rais'd offspring ! his opprobrious breed !
 “ Then shall they lord it ! hold the foremost place !
 “ What hope of other rule, or other race ?

“ Then

“ Then well may villagers our rights support ;
 “ And slaves receive the honours of a court !
 “ Though distant yet the voice of discontent,
 “ Thus warn’d, let prudence the increase prevent ;
 “ Ere yet in open audience they complain :
 “ That done, the terms propos’d may then be vain.
 “ For judge but of the future by the past,
 “ All private murmur will speak loud at last.
 “ What need of words ? To open all my soul—
 “ Better resign a part, than lose the whole.”

He paus’d, and sighing—“ Yes, it must be done ;
 “ The fate your daughter found attends your son—
 “ By the same hand, on the same hour of night,
 “ Torn from your bosom, carried from your sight—
 “ Harder the trial, with the boy to part,
 “ Longer in view, and nearer to your heart—
 “ He grew to sense, was knowing, and was known—
 “ The loss a parent well may feel and own.
 “ For this I came, to warn you and persuade,
 “ To summon ev’ry virtue to your aid :
 “ Left, hurried from yourself, you quit the rein,
 “ And ill your trust and character maintain.”
 Thus he : the wively patience thus rejoin’d :
 “ This have I said, and this I bear in mind :
 “ Your

" Your will is mine ; your pleasure mine I make :
 " Forsake me, life, ere I this rule forsake.
 " Slain as your daughter, let your son be slain ;
 " Confirm his being, or his death ordain !
 " In her, in him, no claim Griselda knows,
 " But her long vigils and maternal throes.
 " What but a short amusement was her gain,
 " For previous sickness and successive pain ?
 " All other right belongs to you alone ;
 " Yours be it to conduct what is your own.
 " Consider my content below your care ;
 " In neither child Griselda claims a share.
 " I too am yours, in all and ev'ry part ;
 " For when you gave your hand, I gave my heart.
 " Not that I plead affection, yet deny
 " Obedience due ; I own the forceful tie.
 " From that then blest to this still happy day,
 " (E'er since you threw my rural weeds away)
 " Then I acknowledg'd, and acknowledge still,
 " That with my habit I depos'd my will,
 " Freedom of action, liberty of choice ;
 " Griselda's voice must still confirm your voice ;
 " Urge what you urge, forbear what you forbear :
 " I wait your order, as your dress I wear.

" Nay

" Nay more: had I your thoughts by prescience
 known,
 " Such passive duty had not now been shewn.
 " With your felicity I could not part,
 " Though ev'ry string it tore that brac'd my heart.
 " Myself had been as forward to propose,
 " And quell the tumult, ere so high it rose.
 " But now that your resolve is fully told,
 " Determin'd as your own, my purport hold.
 " And were my death but wanting to your ease,
 " Death would I bear to serve you, or to please.
 " For death, that weak or wicked minds may move,
 " Makes no comparison to loss of love."

Her steady virtue fill'd him with surprise;
 Long on the ground he look'd with musing eyes:
 Then left her presence, in appearance sad;
 But glad at heart. Could such a heart be glad?

And strait the ill-presaging ruffian came,
 The same in gesture, and in face the same.
 Rude, as he seiz'd the sister where she lay,
 He seiz'd the brother, or in ruder way;
 Worse than before, if worse he could devise,
 More insolent his steps, more stern his eyes.

A scene

A scene all human nature must detect !
 Yet could the feeling mother steel her breast.
 She clasp'd the boy, then (wonderful to tell !)
 She gently kiss'd, and mildly bade farewell ;
 And thus address'd the minister of death :
 “ This let me crave, when he resigns his breath,
 “ This (if your lord object not) let me crave :
 “ Provide my little son a decent grave ;
 “ His tender limbs, full delicate to sight,
 “ Protect from birds by day, and beasts by night.”
 She humbly ask'd ; he no return affords,
 Unless in looks, more horrible than words.

Her strength of soul Gualtherus more and more
 Admir'd ; a pure, but inexhaustless store !
 Like gold extracted from long-hidden mines,
 That still the more 'tis try'd, the more refines.
 Yet was he not content : to such a bent
 Of fix'd mistrust no proof could give content.
 For now, his quiet studious to perplex,
 He ruminates the malice of the sex ;
 The face of ease, that hides the secret smart ;
 The tongue, still ready to bely the heart.
 And oft, had there been room, he seem'd inclin'd
 To term her patience cruelty of mind.

Such dread effusion of her infant's blood,
 Unmov'd what tender mother had withstood ?
 And though he knew (by strict observance prov'd)
 That next to him each tender child she lov'd ;
 And, but that him she lov'd, lov'd more than life ;
 He doubts the woman, forc'd to praise the wife.

He waited, if in look or word estrang'd,
 Her fondness lessen'd, or her temper chang'd.
 But neither word nor look admit a doubt,
 For all seem'd peace within, and joy without.
 One harmony of face and soul appears ;
 Days following days, and years succeeding years.
 More true as she advanc'd in age she grew,
 (Could genuine truth be said to grow more true ?)
 As if by nature, not by marriage join'd,
 Two forms were influenc'd by one ruling mind.
 Whate'er he sought, seen or unseen his aim,
 Same as his will, her pleasure was the same.
 She thought 'twas not her province to contest,
 Her ready faith suppos'd it for the best.
 Whether the lovely offspring liv'd or dy'd,
 Much though she fear'd, she could not well decide :
 But still her soul this principle maintain'd,
 That if they dy'd, Gualtherus was constrain'd.

She

She judg'd it his misfortune, not his fault;
 For much of his humanity she thought ;
 And much of her concern this thought remov'd,
 She knew he could not part with what he lov'd.
 This sacrifice if boist'rous faction claim'd,
 She own'd he must assent, nor could be blam'd.
 But was it possible to steer between
 The father and the prince, and guard the mean ?
 She could not frame the risque he had not ran ;
 For so she took, nor so mistook the man :
 Hoping the best, and to the worst resign'd ;
 Such was her force and confidence of mind.

Through all this mild complacency of life
 Fell she as mother, yet she rose as wife.
 No other good, besides his good, she knew,
 Of worldly int'rest, or of private view.
 No loss, beside his loss, could give her pain,
 No gain advantage her, beside his gain.
 These were her rules, these hard but golden rules,
 (Not well observ'd in matrimonial schools.)
 Wives on their husbands should rely alone,
 And by maturer judgment mend their own.

Not so the subject ; where his conduct fail'd,
 More strict to mark, than where his worth prevail'd :

Fond of complaint, and ready of surmise,
Each princely virtue they could turn to vice.
That here much cause was giv'n, must be allow'd,
Much to alarm the council and the crowd.
Dark the design, and wide the rumour spread,
And equal horror and compassion bred.
The silence of the court some guilt confess'd;
The children missing, malice adds the rest.
Doubtful as he in conduct, they severe
In censure, send the tale from ear to ear.
“ Gualtherus, by unthinking love misled,
“ First makes his slave the partner of his bed;
“ And then, the stain impatient to endure,
“ Adds to the vile offence a viler cure.
“ But what had the long-suff'ring mother done ?”
(O'er things unknown thus knowingly they run)
“ The children, what ? Then, such unnat'ral death,
“ Giv'n by the hand that should preserve their
breath.”

On facts uncertain while the crowd debate,
They hate, that lov'd; that lov'd not, doubly hate,
Loud was his infamy, as once his fame !
“ A murd'rer ! an accurst, detested name !

“ A villain,

“ A villain, not from passion, but design !
 “ Abjur'd by laws, both human and divine ! ”
 Yet might the people murmur, or assent,
 Gualtherus firm pursued his fixt intent.

But check awhile, my muse, thy looser rein,
 To court the judgment of the female train.
 Full fain would I consult, in time and place,
 Their learn'd opinion ; doubtful is the case.
 Declare, which of the two was most to blame ?
 Was he too rigid, or was she too tame ?
 Each husband left sole arbiter of life,
 What would become of many an honest wife ?
 What would she suffer sentenc'd to submit,
 From all his pride of sense, and spleen of wit ?
 Or grant such trials as Griselda ran
 May show that woman is the slave of man :
 Say, might not these for any wife suffice ?
 What could a harden'd husband more devise,
 To try her faith, her constancy to prove ?
 Great, you must own, her patience and her love.

But 'tis a truth the sex need not be told,
 That men are modell'd in a various mould ;
 And some, as old and new experience finds,
 Endued with most perverse unyielding minds.

In these, whatever sense first strikes their thought,
 (Or wrong or right) th' impression deep is wrought.
 Dying, they keep the first resolves they make ;
 Bound to opinion, as a bear to stake.
 If properly the object strikes his sight,
 'Tis great good luck, the obstinate goes right.
 But sure the chance is more than equal found,
 That wrong he goes, yet travels round and round.
 Submit, intreat, diversify, explain,
 Enlarge, confirm, confute ; the task is vain.
 To satisfy the purport of his will,
 Th' event must follow, be it good or ill.

Twice, from the nuptial day, seven years were told,
 And twice seven years the nuptial trials hold.
 Each proof severe Griselda firmly pass'd,
 Yet one remain'd behind, the worst, though last.
 A doubt he rais'd, and nourish'd in his breast ;
 Nor till he found the truth could think of rest.

“ There are (he judg'd) a race of selfish mind,
 “ That own no tie of nature, or of kind ;
 “ Who rigidly their breasts to others steel ;
 “ Yet for themselves most sensibly they feel.
 “ Such hear, with equal ease, the parting groan
 “ Of them they never knew, or long have known ;

“ And

" And view the wreck, without distres or care,
 " Of those that bore them, or of those they bear.
 " No partner they of joint affection own ;
 " Their pleasure and their pain is self alone.
 " And such she is, or what, I'm yet to learn :—
 " Hence her submission ; hence her unconcern ;
 " If, try'd in self, she ends as she began,
 " She must be more than woman, more than man."

Thus he ; such early prejudice he nurst,
 That the last trial but includes the first.
 For this, a messenger to Rome he sent,
 (Now was the time to give the scruple vent)
 In legal phrase, the marriage to annul,
 And counterfeit in form the papal bull.
 His hasty passions to this course incline,
 The shortest way to answer his design.
 " Take for your plan some old pontific frame ;
 " Fashion'd anew, the use will be the same."
 At Rome the messenger arriv'd, and sped ;
 A forging hand he found, and scheming head.
 Nor well could fail in that prolific court,
 Where surrogates, scribes, proctors, priests, resort.
 'Twas modell'd like to like, and word for word :
 He sends a formal copy to his lord ;

Who, as he us'd on points of high debate,
Conven'd all orders that compos'd the state.

Summon'd, they meet; the prince assumes the
throne:

Then thus, with sterner brow, and haughtier tone:
“ Content, as fortunate, in single life,
“ You forc'd me on that dang'rous rock, a wife:
“ A wife I chose (nor now disguise the truth)
“ From heat of blood, th' intemperance of youth.
“ One, whose excelling form my passion mov'd,
“ I lov'd; and all seem'd right, because I lov'd.
“ No other was my motive, or my aim;
“ I neither sought your interest, nor my fame.
“ My riper age this folly would atone;
“ Strength to your state, and lustre to my throne,
“ I would acquire, in kindred grandeur ty'd;
“ The fair to great Peganus near ally'd.
“ For this the papal chair our envoy moves;
“ The state will sanction, what the church approves.”

A long and hoarse applause th' assembly roars,
Like rolling waves that murmur to the shores.
These, slaves by nature, born to bear the rod,
Swallow'd his words, as oracles from God.

Theſe,

Those, from long habit custom'd to the bit,
Their duty thought, to hear and to submit.
Others approv'd it not, yet not withstood,
From frigid virtue, indolently good.
But some, from sordid or ambitious views,
Prais'd the design, and pray'd, "No time he'd lose."
And so had acted, was the case his own,
And good Gualtherus sentenc'd from the throne.

Yet some of nobler soul (but these were few)
Place all Griselda's merit full in view ;
Her worth of private and of public kind,
Her blameless conduct, and unerring mind ;
And with bold truth and gen'rous ardor plead
Th' injustice and dishonour of the deed.
Though prince and subject join'd their gen'ral voice,
No pow'r could authorise the guilty choice.
Let Pope and Synod their whole strength unite,
That which is wrong, they never could make right.
"Repudiate without cause the faultless dame !
" 'Twas tyranny ; it soil'd a life of fame.
"They humbly differ'd, and the harsh divorce
"They could not counsel ; 'twas an act of force."
Here rising, " 'Tis my will (he said) ; withdraw"—
Nor till that hour had urg'd his will for law.

Meantime

Meantime the trusty guard returns from Rome;
 And all Saluzzo mourns Griselda's doom.
 None penetrate the fraud, or doubt a wile,
 So was it fram'd in true pontific stile:
 So fraught with church sufficiency and pride;
 And thus the apostolic roll imply'd.

“ That he, the delegate of God, the pope,
 “ Their heav'nly guide, and their terrestrial hope,
 “ In kind compliance to his son's request,
 “ (Weighing the people's good, and prince's rest)
 “ Did, and hereby authority had giv'n,
 “ (In virtue of his right deriv'd from heav'n)
 “ To nullify the marriage from that hour,
 “ Save, to the wife whate'er she brought in dow'r;
 “ With sundry meanless items, quaint and old;
 “ So sign'd, so seal'd, so witness'd, so enroll'd.”—
 To this was added, for the subject's ease,
 A load of pardons, and at mod'rate fees.

Handed from heav'n the scroll, the crowd believ'd;
 To flav'ry prone, and form'd to be deceiv'd.
 Moles, that in darkness center'd their delight!
 The day to them had been a pain of sight.
 “ The pope infallible with one accord
 “ They held, nor less infallible their lord.

“ For

“ For what their lord requir'd, the pope allow'd.”
 Take but in largeſt ſenſe the term of crowd.
 Nor try'd by fortune, nor by birth defin'd,
 But honesty of heart, and worth of mind.
 Without theſe qualities, let princes know,
 They are themſelves the vulgar and the low.

The rude Saluzzians swallow'd all the bait,
 (I mean the number of the ſmall and great).
 “ In heav'n, they own'd, all marriages were made ;
 “ Yet was the prince by heat of youth betray'd.
 “ If then contracted parties diſagree,
 “ Apply to whom, but him that keeps the key ?
 “ What other power could finiſh the debâte,
 “ And shut and ope the matrimonial gate ?”

There wanted not, in all her doubts and fears,
 Some to convince Grifelda's eyes and ears :
 Prompt to inſinuate what the prince intends,
 (And theſe the foremost of her female friends)
 With cruel pity they lament her fate,
 “ So alter'd he, and ſo eſtrang'd of late !”
 Others, malicioſly, to hurt her reſt,
 Who thought in silence they had read her breast,
 “ Urge the barbarity, that could deſtroy,
 “ By turns; the lovely girl, and hopeſful boy.”

Others,

Others, to like humanity inclin'd,
 " Hint at the bride, and the divorce design'd ;
 " And were they bound to lead so curst a life,
 " Would rather be the relift than the wife."
 To this she own'd, " Appearances were strong,
 " But yet she could not think he could do wrong."
 What force of virtue could the shock sustain ?
 Love, so severely try'd, yet try'd in vain :
 And, though her looks no change unusual shew,
 Full deep her heart, I deem, was charg'd with woe.
 But, humble though her birth, her soul was great ;
 Form'd to endure the worst extreme of fate ;
 Fix'd from his pleasure never to depart,
 To whom she gave her innocence and heart.
 Free was her breast from sighs, her face from tears,
 Though well confirm'd th' unwelcome news she hears ;
 Knows on what message, and with what intent,
 The frequent envoys to Bologna went ;
 Where rich Peganus rul'd with peaceful sword,
 Whose wife was sister to her faithless lord.
 This princeſ, with humarer talents bleſt,
 A mind, resplendent as her state, poſſeſſ'd.
 To learn her manners, foreign dames resort ;
 The virtues, not the vices, of a court.

Among

Among the rest, a maid excelling fair
 Was still distinguish'd with peculiar care :
 Bred from an infant, though of birth unknown,
 The royal pair respect her as their own :
 And her, 'twas rumour'd, on his change of life,
 The Marquis of Saluzzo chose for wife ;
 To dignify his state, adorn his bed :
 And wide the fame malicious echo spread ;
 " That now Griselda must resign her claim,
 " For from Bologna a new comfort came ;
 " Bright as the sun, and youthful as the day,
 " With splendid equipage, and rich array.
 " The great Peganus, to augment her state,
 " With all his noble lords in order wait,
 " The kindred maid respectfully to guide,
 " And her young brother, riding by her side ;
 " Who to Saluzzo shap'd direct their way,
 " The distant journey lessening, day by day."

Say, was not this sufficient to molest ?—
 The hard Gualtherus might have spar'd the rest.
 Through silence some humanity had shone,
 Pity might lessen wrong, though not atone.
 But he, when full the court, to tempt her more,
 Thus spoke in boist'rous terms unus'd before.

" Not

“ Not much displeas’d, though chose from humble
life,
“ I saw you fill the station of a wife.
“ Not for your beauty, birth, or wealth, or youth ;
“ But for your duty, faith, and love, and truth.
“ Yet now I find, by sad experience wife,
“ That in great lordship greater slav’ry lies.
“ To this conspir’d my fortune and my fate ;
“ Though prince, yet lowest vassal in the state.
“ Debarr’d, where ev’ry swain may use his voice,
“ Freedom of will, and liberty of choice.
“ A wife to wed, the public care ordains,
“ And now to quit that wedded wife constrains.
“ A new is sought ; nor is the rising flood
“ Of factious discontent to be withstood.
“ For this, full pow’r to loose my former vows
“ Th’ indulgent father of the church allows ;
“ And a new bride is chose, and on the way,
“ To obviate all suspense and all delay.
“ Be strong of heart, and void anon the place :
“ Yet this I grant you ; take it as a grace ;
“ All that you brought me on the nuptial hour,
“ I grant you ; take it all ; that princely dow’r !
“ But

" But well would you observe what I advise ;
 " Know, they can never fall that never rise.
 " Then choose an equal on the peaceful plains,
 " And live the little princess of the swains.
 " Lost to a palace, in a cottage rest :
 " None may presume for ever to be blest.
 " Yet this celestial gift to all is sent,
 " To bear the stroke of fortune with content."
 " I am not now to learn (she strait replies)
 " The wondrous distance that between us lies.
 " Me not your partial choice could worthy make,
 " To share your grandeur, or your bed partake.
 " Yet if this house (as heav'n may witness bear)
 " I enter'd wife, I liv'd not mistress there.
 " As best became, I study'd to behave,
 " As one above your slaves, your humblest slave.
 " That there so long I held the foremost place,
 " I think it not my merit, but your grace ;
 " And if a fitter comfort you require,
 " Content to my paternal cot retire ;
 " Humbly to dwell, where humbly I was bred ;
 " Nor share your grandeur, nor partake your bed.
 " There, clean of heart, the widow, as the bride,
 " Will live, if not to you, to none ally'd.

" Nor

" Nor shall it be my blot, while life remain,
 " To soil your choice by any vulgar stain.
 " That once you deign'd to join me to your side;
 " This thought let me indulge of royal pride;
 " This single thought. May heav'n propitious grant,
 " In her you choose, the wealth and birth I want.
 " Pleas'd, for your good, the station to resign,
 " That was my bliss, that once, my lord, was thine.
 " Thence pris'd by me. Disturb'd if I depart,
 " 'Tis not to lose your fortune, but your heart.
 " Such dower you proffer me as first I brought;
 " Those rustic weeds: yet where may those be sought?
 " Well I remember, on the nuptial hour,
 " With scorn you threw aside that wretched dower.
 " Far other then your gesture and your mind;
 " In look how gentle! and in speech how kind!
 " But I have heard, and prov'd the saying true;
 " Love is not, when 'tis old, what 'twas when new.
 " Yet, shall no fear of death constrain my will,
 " (Death, the last line of human good and ill!).
 " Low as I fall, at fortune to repine,
 " Proud of the thought, that once your heart was
 mine.
 " Then, when you rais'd your vassal to your breast,
 " And rudely clad before, full richly dress'd,

Obedient

" Obedient duty, and unspotted fame,
 " Was all I brought: no other dower I claim.
 " But why recall to mind that blissful day?
 " You wish it had not been, and I obey.
 " Then down I lay this sceptre from my hand,
 " (Here never borne as symbol of command)
 " Cast from my head this decorated crown,
 " And from my body loose this ermin'd gown.
 " And last this ring (this last let me restore),
 " What with unwearied constancy I wore.
 " Lodg'd in the stores, the rest your orders wait,
 " Your gifts of love, or ornaments of state.
 " Naked I came, and naked I return;
 " Nor must I, since it suits your grandeur, mourn.
 " This only let me beg, nor beg in vain,
 " For what I brought, and never can regain;
 " For all my duty, faith, and love, and truth;
 " Untainted chastity, unpractis'd youth;
 " Years that I pass'd, and children that I bore;"
 (The last unguarded words she hurried o'er.)
 " Grant me such clothes as fit Griselda best,
 " A common garment, and a rustic vest.
 " An outcast let me be: yet this I pray,
 " Let me not, like a worm, go by the way;

“ The people’s laughter, and their lord’s disgrace :
 “ For this may cast below my servile race ;
 “ Below her state, that once was call’d your wife.
 “ None with immodefty can tax my life.”

With dignity unalter’d this she said,
 Her cheeks alone effus’d a warmer red ;
 Compos’d, though pain’d ; determin’d, though dif-
 tress’d.

The priase was mov’d, as every eye confess’d.

“ Your vest retain” (impassion’d he reply’d)

“ But quit all other marks of stately pride.”

He could no more—his voice its utt’rance lost,
 And this last proof he tempted to his cost.

Silent he stood, with agitated breast ;

But his look witness’d many a sigh supprest.

Yet tears would flow a voluntary tide ;

And these he strove, and strove in vain to hide.

His heart against his stubborn will conspir’d ;

Aside he turn’d, and hastily retir’d.

Her condescension struck so strong a light,
 It fill’d the court with horror and affright.

“ May I be never to such ill betray’d !”

In silence sigh’d the unexperienc’d maid.

Each widow to her secret friend alone
 Whisper'd, "Thus treated, he had had his own."
 And ev'ry wife attested earth and heav'n,
 " 'Twas a mean act, a bad example giv'n :"
 And aneient maid with ancient maid began ;
 " How great our 'scape, who never yet knew man!"

Meantime Grifelds secretly withdrew,

And disarray'd her safe from public view.

Conforming, far as decency allow'd,

She shunn'd the noble and ignoble crowd.

All that she could she left of her attire,

And no intrusion furthering her desire,

The postern gate she pass'd, the public street

With naked head she gain'd, and naked feet.

But soon the crowd her noted form descry'd,
 And pour'd before, behir'd, on ev'ry side.

Down hirf thou laid, in vain hast thou laid down,

Thy robe, thy ring, thy sceptre, and thy crown.

Stript of thy state, thy native state they find ;

Grandeur of mien, and majesty of mind :

Exil'd in thee, thy exile they attend ;

The friendless, that in thee still found a friend ;

The motherless, that met a mother's care ;

For 'twas thy good, thy good with all to share :

Hence, barefoot as she trod the flinty road,
 Their vestments o'er the rugged way they strow'd.
 And not one breast refus'd a pitying sigh ;
 Void of a tear was not one melting eye :
 Grief in each voice and face, exprest and shown,
 In ev'ry voice and face, except her own.
 Though loud they spread her praise, and urg'd her
 wrong,

She curb'd resentment, and restrain'd her tongue.
 Silent she mov'd, majestically slow,
 As one in pain that pleasur'd, joy'd in woe.

But wicked fame precedes with nimbler tread,
 The father reaching in his homely stead.
 And though the long neglect, year after year,
 Had caus'd him many a sigh, and many a tear ;
 Never to touch the court on pain enjoin'd ;
 Whence proud he thought his prince, or child unkind,
 Yet musing with himself, full oft he said,
 " By force of love Gualtherus was mailed.
 " That fire once cool'd, his lust will yield to pride,
 " And the wife fall a victim to the bride."
 Though length of time had fortify'd his breast,
 The sudden rumour rous'd him from his rest.

His

His clothes from off his aged breast he tears,
 From off his aged head his hoary hairs ;
 Devotes the light, and deprecates the day,
 And life, impairing with too slow decay.
 Then seeks with anxious care his rustic hoard,
 Where his fond heart her virgin habit stor'd ;
 Sav'd to indulge his mind, and to employ,
 In pleasing pain, and melancholy joy.
 Now found of use. He speeds with feeble haste,
 Cover'd his child, lamented, and embrac'd.

Here for a space remain'd the patient wife,
 And, thrown from great, returns to vulgar life ;
 Yet never once was heard her lord to blame,
 Though spirited by many a busy dame.
 Above the power of fortune, or of fate,
 She rose in good or ill, alike sedate.
 In good, against distress she arm'd her still ;
 And still prepar'd her for success, in ill.
 This was her character, by all allow'd,
 " Virtuous, though beautiful ; though great, not
 proud.
 " Discreet, as witty ; sprightly, as serene :
 " Sage, but not sad ; and humble, but not mean."

246. GUALTHERUS AND GRISELDA: OR,

On Job priests flourish still, with wondrous ease,
And priests on Job may flourish if they please.
We mean not here to enter the dispute ;
Yet priests can prove a woman is a brute ;
And (when it serves their turn) a man, a God :
But 'tis the safest way to kiss the rod.
Yet when the man of Uz, whose perfect life
They gloss, and blazon the intemp'rate wife,
Who bade him to his face, curse God and die ;
Mean they the sex ? Sure, priests may err or lie !
Yet, not to stab the church, but gently probe,
I say, Griselda far transcended Job !
And fast as men could women texts expound,
As many female suff'ers would be found ;
Women than men more patient, and more true :
This is my faith.—But then it holds of few.

Gualtherus his emotion soon repress'd,
Resum'd his mind, and fortify'd his breast.
“ Wondrous her faith, (he commun'd with his heart)
“ Wondrous her love, if free from female art !
“ To bear submissive such repeated wrongs !
“ That temper rarely to that sex belongs :
“ Nor ev'n to seek, from words or sighs, relief !
“ Was it excess of patience, or of grief ?

“ Again,

" Again, not once reproach, not once withstand !
 " 'Twas great disguise of soul, or great command !
 " Sustain such weight of woe with tearless eyes !—
 " But to the covert for relief she flies.
 " There, doubtless, vents her rage, and makes her
 moan ;
 " Echo pays sigh for sigh, and groan for groan.
 " Then change the scene from privacy of place ;
 " Yes; let her see her rival face to face."

Thus as he meditates the full assay,
 Arriv'd a courier, and at prime of day,
 To notice, " That the princely youth and dame,
 " With great Peganus, from Bologna came :
 " That safely they had pass'd the rocky way,
 " And hop'd to reach him with the setting ray."

Meantime the banish'd wife at early dawn
 Unfolds her flock, and follows to the lawn ;
 To where Gualtherus, loit'ring in the course,
 First stopp'd, from love, or failure of his horse.
 There, lowly feated on the dewy ground,
 She feeds her little charge, that bleats around ;
 And plies the distaff that before her stands :
 Yet slow the widow'd to the virgin hands :

For though the twine with equal care she wrought,
 Oft would intrude an interrupting thought;
 Oft would her soul her former state retrace :
 " Exalted honour is a slipp'ry place !
 " Though palaces are high, and cots are low ;
 " Here lies sure peace ; there lies destructive show.
 " But mind is all to all, mean or sublime ;
 " Mind is not to be chang'd by place or time ;
 " In time or place, unblest, or blest can dwell ;
 " Can make a hell of heav'n, a heav'n of hell."

Thus musing : for the proof, Gualtherus sends ;
 She quits the calm reflexion, and attends ;
 In dres a shepherdess ; the same to see
 As on her marriage day. She bends her knee.
 But he, more slow to raise her with his hand,
 Nods and imparts his last severe command.

" This day we celebrate the previous rite ;
 " Griselda ! know, our nuptials crown the night.
 " Full to profusion is the palace stor'd,
 " With all to deck the bed, or cheer the board.
 " Yet much I fear, the feast may wrong my foul ;
 " For execution mends or mars the whole.
 " Though gen'rous the design, and large the cost,
 " All beauty is in want of order lost.

" Not

" Not one through all Saluzzo can I find,
 " That knows so well my manner or my mind,
 " The guests, or to distinguish, or invite,
 " Put show to use, to profit turn delight :
 " But you, long wont this station to support,
 " Can best advise what suits the prince and court :
 " Again exert the talents you have shown,
 " Display at large the splendour of my throne ;
 " Add ev'ry outward instance of my love :
 " All that I might omit, but must approve.
 " But chiefly turn you to attend the fair,
 " Be that your daily thought, and nightly care.
 " 'Tis true, this rustic garb may shew neglect ;
 " But well it suits your state, if you reflect.
 " For pride of dress is sure a barren curse ;
 " Ere fancy you consult, consult your purse.
 " This is my will. Proceed without delay ;
 " And do the proper honours of the day."
 " Much I rejoice," the mild Griselda cries,
 " That on my faith your confidence relies ;
 " And hail the cause that brings me to the place,
 " Where oft at distance I may see your face ;
 " And oft your voice with due attention hear :
 " Thus far I may indulge my eye and ear.

" In

“ In honest diligence, through servile life,
 “ Pleas’d will I tend the husband and the wife ;
 “ Affiduous to prevent what she requires,
 “ Solicitous to check my own desires.
 “ So will I act (if but my heart allows)
 “ As I ne’er knew your flames, or heard your vows.”

Her answer half defeated his design ;
 “ Our confidence you see—the trust be thine.”
 He said. She mingles with the menial train,
 No service she neglects, and spares no pain,
 To grace the bed, or magnify the throne ;
 And forms a feast more splendid than her own ;
 Intent, or to dispose, or to provide ;
 But pains her most, for what concern’d the bride.

This done, each noted chief, each noted dame,
 She summons to the feast : so call’d, they came.
 These she receives, as suits their rank or race,
 In vulgar habit, but with noble grace :
 Arranging all (for such her lord’s desire)
 From wealthy citizen to landed ’squire ;
 Equals in place, not worth : from hardy knight,
 To him that never saw the face of fight :
 From peer, that builds on ancestors his fame,
 To him that founds his title and his name :

From

From learn'd and just dispenser of the laws,
To him that judges by the bribe the cause :
From seer, whose charity gives health and ease,
To him that poisons for the sake of fees :
From priest, of life unstain'd, and zeal sincere,
To him of holy fraud and pious leer.

Enter, of good and bad, a mingled crew.
'Tis the true state of things, or old, or new :
Virtue and vice divides each mixt degree ;
Such was the world ; and such will ever be.

But as her care descends from bow'r to hall,
All still inspecting, still amending all ;
Thus to a maid of rank a wife of spirit :
" Say, in her meanness see you any merit ?
" I vow, by all the virtue of my pride,
" Was I Griselda sever'd from his side ;
" Then cast, as handmaid, to a second wife,
" Slave to his will, yet trusted with his life ;
" The present bondage should redeem the past ;
" Bridegroom and bride, this night should be your
last."

Meantime the foremost of the train alight ;
And fast the people pour'd to see the sight.

Close,

Close, and more close, the murmur'ring infects grew,
 Should'ring for place, and crowding for a view.
 And much they prais'd the show, and much the choice.
 Ah ! who would rest upon the public voice ?
 Griselda's rise with equal noise they hail'd ;
 With equal noise Griselda's fall bewail'd.
 Be deaf, fair stranger, to their senseless cries !
 Thus would they treat thy fall, who treat thy rise.

“ Gualtherus is no fool (the crowd confess'd)
 “ Changing his wife, but changing for the best.
 “ Griselda wants no merit to engage ;
 “ But fairer this, and of a softer age.
 “ Griselda was inur'd to brook command ;
 “ And so may this, when moulded to his hand.
 “ From her what heirs will spring the throne to
 grace !
 “ For she descends from some exalted race.
 “ The brother comes, as sample of the line ;
 “ What lineaments, majestic and divine !”
 O vulgar souls, unstable and untrue !
 Tir'd with the old, transported with the new !
 Turn'd by each blast, as fickle as the fane !
 And faster than the moon ye wax and wane !

Hapless

Hapless the prince, whose ear delighted draws
 The praise of crowds, and swallows vain applause ;
 Whose eye transported views the supple round
 Of courtiers, whom he trusts, yet fails to sound.
 His ear may be misled, deceiv'd his eye ;
 Crowds can praise folly, courtiers look a lie.
 Safer, the call of virtue to pursue,
 That sep'retes wrong from right, and false from true.
 Though crowds may change, unfaithful as the wind,
 Can they depose the monarch from his mind ?
 Though courtiers from allegiance may depart,
 Great is the empire of an honest heart.
 For inborn worth alone knows no controul ;
 Fortune may change the state, not change the soul.
 But good or ill, as man pursues or flies,
 So truly he may fall, so truly rise.
 'Tis virtue gives him in high life to shine ;
 Virtue in low is an unminted mine.
 The force of each was in Griselda shown,
 Great in a cot, and humble in a throne !

Thus of the many mad the sober few
 Adjudg'd ; who lov'd the old, and fear'd the new.
 " And fools (they call'd the number) to disown,
 " For good they know not yet, a good long known."

In

In state she enters now the palace gate,
 And ent'ring is receiv'd with answ'ring state.
 The prince descending fast, to meet the bride,
 A dame of high condition join'd his side ;
 Tongue of the sex, she fastens on his ear,
 And thus express'd her fashionable fear.

“ A shepherdess,” she said, “ is such a sight,
 “ It soils the splendour of the nuptial rite.
 “ Excuse me, 'tis not my peculiar plea ;
 “ Here all the sex in one request agree ;
 “ We make it our petition and desire,
 “ Griselda may ré-dress her, or retire ;
 “ Nor stand to foreign lords a mark of sport,
 “ And scandal to the ladies of the court.”

Nought to his scheme so cross as this request.
 He veil'd the truth, and gloss'd it with a jest.
 Known was the dame to love supreme command,
 And hold the bridle with a steady hand.
 “ Aught to the fair it grieves me to refuse ;
 “ But 'tis too late another course to choose.
 “ Griselda's inward merit well you know ;
 “ And what is dress, but a fictitious show ?
 “ Yet, seek you, why to court this rudely brought ?
 “ Young is our bride, and should be mildly taught.

“ This

" This rural garb is humble, and is plain ;
 " In public shown, this maxim to maintain :
 " Plain truth and humble duty suits a wife ;
 " An emblem for the conduct of her life."

I pass as trivial, nor the tale prolong,
 With masque or dance, with minstrelsy or song ;
 Nor, drawn by fancy, deviate from the way,
 For kind reception here, there grand array.
 I leave each train, their princes at their head ;
 The youth and virgin by Peganus led :
 Whom long Gualtherus fasten'd to his breast,
 And all, and each, with kindred warmth caref'd.
 I dwell not on the maid, in fresh fifteen,
 Whether array'd in white, red, blue, or green ;
 Nor count how promising the boy appears,
 How manly, measuring half his sister's years.
 Here glean, ye bards, who barren subjects choose ;
 Griselda will admit no wand'ring muse.
 Short of her virtues though thy numbers flow,
 Muse, keep her first in sight, though last in show.
 Her copious mind makes all her single care ;
 But most she strives to serve and joy the fair.
 Natives or strangers pleas'd and proud to see ;
 The whole she ranges, each in his degree.

The

The foreign lords a due surprise express,
 So much her manner supersedes her dress.
 Nor stints her tongue the youth and maid to raise
 With praise well judg'd ; for they deserv'd her praise.
 Though not to flatt'ry vile her words descend,
 No flatt'ring courtier could her words amend.
 A gen'rous flow of soul, that scorn'd all art ;
 Unsoil'd by envy ; genuine, from the heart !
 Some worth it argues, a friend's worth to know ;
 Virtue, to own the virtue of a foe.

Now was the hour the guests to entertain,
 And one by one precedes the household train.
 Just at that season, ere the board was crown'd,
 While all prepar'd to join the social round ;
 Gualtherus turns, Griselda to explore :
 " Seek her," he said ; but sent his eyes before.
 And where he spy'd her busy'd in the hall,
 " Attend," he calls ; and she attends his call.
 " Griselda, (with indiff'rence feign'd he said)
 " You see the maid I choose, and mean to wed.
 " Speak (he continued with a face of sport)
 " What think you of our bride ? Make just report.
 " How to her form, how to her worth, inclin'd ?
 " Pass sentence on her person, and her mind."

She,

She mildly took the word, and strait reply'd ;
 " Ill though the relict might commend the bride,
 " No malice of the sex, no spleen of wrong,
 " My mind shall bias, or mislead my tongue.
 " Never these eyes in perfect age could trace
 " A juster form, or yet a fairer face.
 " Never, from youth imperfect, heard these ears
 " Thoughts so exprest, the words of ripen'd years.
 " Base is the office, wrongly to debase ;
 " Lessen her worth, I rise not in her place.
 " With truth I praise her, and without design ;
 " Her want of merit would not add to mine.
 " What fully she exacts, I freely give ;
 " And may, each blest in each, securely live !"

Thus as she spoke, warm grew the virgin's face,
 Rosy her breast : she blush'd with modest grace.
 Then back retir'd, by her own praise subdu'd.
 Griselda seiz'd th' occasion, and pursu'd.

" This let me add, by long experience wise,
 " And once presume Gualtherus to advise.
 " Judge ne'er so hardly of our sex or life ;
 " Ill usage may pervert, not mend, a wife.
 " When from the bounds of reason men depart,
 " What, but the force of truth, and faith of heart,

" Retains affection, too severely prov'd ?
 " Twice, think not, to be so endur'd, and lov'd.
 " Try not, as me you try'd, this tender maid,
 " To summon more than virtue to her aid.
 " If I to pain was senseless, deaf to mirth,
 " I owe it to the lowness of my birth.
 " The hand to labour us'd, the heart to care,
 " Ills I had borne, and ills could know to bear.
 " But she was nobly born, and fondly fed ;
 " In plenty nurtur'd, and in grandeur bred :
 " Not like Griselda, rais'd from low degree ;
 " By thee to be debas'd, preferr'd by thee !
 " She, in the trust of innocence and youth,
 " Nor doubts your constancy, nor fears your truth.
 " Soon would she feel distress, soon find a cure ;
 " She could not well adversity endure :
 " Well could she not such load of grief sustain ;
 " For death would soon arrive, and ease her pain."

She spoke from inward ties of kindred blood,
 Or nobler sympathy of good to good :
 Firm as a column, stable as a wall :
 Her grandeur more conspicuous by her fall.

The gen'rous answer, free from spleen or art,
 Rose inly on his mind, and fill'd his heart.

" Too

“ Too far, too far (in ecstasy he cry'd)
 “ Griselda, was thy wifely virtue try'd.
 “ Resume thy wonted state, thy wonted cheer
 “ Resume ; nor think me faithleſs, though severe.
 “ Enough have I assay'd thy love and truth ;
 “ Assay'd to riper age from tender youth ;
 “ So well, as never wife, in pomp array'd,
 “ Or clad in poverty, was yet assay'd.”
 He said, and by his ſide Griselda plac'd,
 Faſt feiz'd her in his arms, and long embrac'd.

As one, from cumbrous ſleep diſturb'd, ſhe ſeems,
 Doubtful if yet ſhe wakes, or ſtill ſhe dreams ;
 If real forms ſtand obvious to her ſight,
 Or float the airy shadows of the night.

He noted her conuſion, ſilence broke,
 And gently prefs'd her hand, and kindly ſpoke.
 “ By him, I ſwear, for man that bled and dy'd,
 “ Thou art my wife ; I ſeek no other bride.
 “ Worthy thy praise the maid, I muſt agree ;
 “ Muſt joy to praise her—for ſhe comes from thee.
 “ And thee, in her, through all her form I trace :
 “ May ſhe in ſoul but match thee as in face !
 “ Thrice five years told (if love not blind theſe eyes)
 “ States all the diſſ'rence that between you lies .

“ In age or beauty. Oh! that heav’n decreed,
“ Her virtue to thy virtue might succeed!
“ Thy daughter this, first object of thy care;
“ And that thy son, Saluzzo’s future heir.
“ Assassin’d? No! Not such our base intent;
“ Safe were the infants to Bologna sent;
“ To good Peganus privily convey’d:
“ His worthy consort rais’d the youth and maid.
“ That here they stand thus honour’d in thy view,
“ Say, to his gen’rous heart what thanks are due?
“ That, in thy view, thus polish’d, here they stand,
“ What thanks are due to her reforming hand?
“ A second mother she, at our desire,
“ Conceal’d their birth; he prov’d a second sire.
“ My motive was mistrust, to own the truth;
“ A stubborn prejudice, imbib’d in youth.
“ Wedlock I judg’d a station of unrest;
“ I found no marry’d pair completely blest:
“ And, for the male too hasty to decide,
“ Plac’d ev’ry error on the female side.
“ I thought your failures to our faults gave rise,
“ Your folly, falsehood, levity, or vice.
“ Hence the first trial, hence arose the last;
“ But well the future shall amend the past.

“ Hence

" Hence was you sworn a life submis to lead,
 " Nor swerve in thought or look, in word or deed.
 " Hence with our daughter when constrain'd to part,
 " I held your duty indolence or art.
 " Hence was the son propos'd ; the son resign'd.
 " This proof of love seem'd cruelty of mind.
 " Hence was you try'd in self. With honest shame,
 " I own the crime : Griselda was the same.
 " But fixt suspicion is the worst of woes,
 " And nought but certainty could bring repose.
 " Let malice (room there is) our conduct blame,
 " Yet my severity shall raise your fame.
 " And could you penetrate my inmost breast,
 " There would you find indelibly exprest,
 " Griselda fills my heart : my wealth, her gain,
 " My bliss, her pleasure ; her distres, my pain.
 " And when most calm her breast, serene her eye,
 " Here many a tear she caus'd, here many a sigh.
 " And let this mitigate, if not atone ;
 " Each trial was not thine, it was my own.
 " And if thy virtue thus exalted shine,
 " Thine is the treasure, the discov'ry mine."
 She that could bear misfortune, that had borne
 Each infant from her tender bosom torn,

Could to a cottage from a throne descend,
And the great bed, she had adorn'd, attend ;
From low to high, from high to low retost,
Could see whate'er on earth she valued lost :
She that could stand the last contempt unmov'd,
Yields to the yielding of the man she lov'd ;
Sinks at the thought of either child restor'd,
Whose loss in secrecy she long deplo'rd.
Patient in ill, in injury resign'd ;
Here first she quits equality of mind.
While all her wish in her possession stood,
Fast flow'd her joy, like the returning flood :
The swell of passion rose to such a height,
'Twas painful pleasure, and severe delight.

Kind as he spoke, with rapture and amaze,
Her eyes she gives upon her lord to gaze ;
And quits but to survey, with silent joy,
The lovely maid and near-resembling boy.
All moves her that she heard, or that she view'd ;
Strong on her soul the tides of joy intrude.
Fain would her tongue have open'd all her breast ;
But there she felt what could not be prest ;
Vain the endeavour : for, in transport tost,
Her voice was stopt, her breath in rapture lost.

Wound

Wound to excess of gratitude and love,
 Her pulse forgot to play, her heart to move.
 No more her form the vital heat retains,
 Slow pass'd the current circling in her veins ;
 The dews of death her trembling limbs assail ;
 Her lips grew livid, and her cheeks grew pale.
 Sounds disproportion'd to her thoughts she hears ;
 Unmeaning murmurs echoing through her ears :
 While misty vapours, that in fancy rise,
 Cloud the sole objects that could charm her eyes.
 She faints ; she falls ; but, sinking to the ground,
 He caught her in his arms. The court surround.

Ye tender youth, in love unblest, or blest,
 Imagination loose, and paint the rest :
 Virtuous or vicious be your course of life,
 Feel you no pain, for husband or for wife ?

Reclining on his breast, she pants for breath ;
 As pleas'd to die, since there she found her death.
 He looks the aid he wants the pow'r to give ;
 As in her life alone he wish'd to live.

A gen'ral care the courtly train confess,
 Joy mixt with sorrow, pleasure with distres.
 These fann'd her bosom, those her head sustain'd ;
 While death o'er life a doubtful conquest gain'd.

Of art and nature ev'ry aid they bring ;
 The cool refreshment of the limpid spring ;
 The juice of herbs that noxious steams repel ;
 Of shrubs the virtues, elegant of smell ;
 Of drugs and simples the salubrious pow'rs ;
 Extract of salts, and quintessence of flow'rs.

Thrice seem'd her eyes to ask the cheer of light,
 Thrice seem'd to sink in everlasting night ;
 And thrice he hail'd her as restor'd from death,
 Thrice wail'd her irrecoverable breath.

At length she mov'd, and, wildly gazing round,
 First in her care the pleas'd Gualtherus found ;
 Next, weeping o'er her, joy'd the maid to see,
 And last the boy, that trembled at her knee.
 The fond assemblage pour'd, without controul,
 On her weak sense, and mollify'd her soul.
 By turns she seiz'd them, and by turns she press'd
 The father and the children to her breast.
 Adown their cheeks the mingling torrents flow,
 The streams of transport, not the streams of woe.

The sweet contagion spread like tainted air ;
 From youth to youth it pass'd, from fair to fair.
 And many a gen'rous heart breath'd many a sigh,
 And many a tear shed many a gentle eye.

A scene

A scene so sweetly sad who fail'd to feel,
 Must have an eye of flint, or heart of steel.
 Long silence follow'd. 'Twas not time for speech ;
 Looks best explain what words want power to reach.

Mirth to restore, Gualtherus soon began,
 Ironically grave ; for that the man.
 " A shepherdess is such an awkward foil,
 " The splendour of the feast she needs must foil.
 " That she should change her garb, on me you call ;
 " And I agree ; for 'tis the plea of all.
 " Ladies, with joy I grant you this request ;
 " Yes, let our wife retire to be re-drest :
 " Nor stand to foreign lords a mark of sport,
 " Or scandal to the beauties of the court."

Pleas'd she retir'd ; for well she read his mind.
 A train of busy females flock behind.
 And now more busy none of all the train,
 Than some that witness'd pleasure in her pain.
 But she that office to the bridal maid
 Assigns, nor wish'd, nor wanted other aid.
 The maiden bride was charm'd with the employ ;
 The sun she knew must set in grief or joy :
 Late made no stranger to her fire's intent ;
 And, as she griev'd, she joy'd for the event.

Soon

Soon was she disarray'd, and soon attir'd,
 For there lay all or more than dres's requir'd ;
 All that could wish the vain, or ask the great,
 In aid of beauty, or in pride of state.
 Nor senseless of their value was the dame ;
 Not senseless, when she thought from whom the
 came.

Strait she return'd, resplendent to behold ;
 Of silver was her vest, her robe of gold.
 The hoards of ages, that her crown compos'd,
 Took lustre from the tresses they inclos'd.
 High in the seat of honour was she plac'd ;
 The seat her virtue fill'd, and beauty grac'd.

The guests in order rang'd the prince address'd,
 And with a noble freedom op'd his brest.
 A gen'rous sene of shame unloos'd his tongue ;
 The wise and brave dares say that he was wrong :
 If virtue errs, she errs against her rules ;
 'Tis ever the reverse with knaves or fools :
 For wilful faults these mend not, or not own ;
 Too weak to see, or wicked to atone.

“ Friends, to the self-accus'd be not unkind ;
 “ Full dear I nourish'd this distrust of mind.

“ Painful

“ Painful the trial, as severe the test ;
“ Had the wife fall'n, the husband was unblest.
“ Be hers the honour, mine be the disgrace ;
“ Yet shall my choice beam glory on my race.
“ Nor friend, nor foe, that act of life shall blame ;
“ That was my own ; and is my praise, not shame.
“ First, that beneath low birth, and mean disguise,
“ Beauty and virtue could not 'scape my eyes.
“ Next, that I held gentility of blood
“ Confists in scorn of ill, and pride of good.
“ Last, that I prov'd worth equal, whence it springs ;
“ From cots of swains, or palaces of kings !
“ Remains there aught Griselda can desire ?
“ Yes, much is due to her neglected fire.
“ What must the good Janicola have borne,
“ To think his worth the object of our scorn ?
“ What not endur'd from solitary life ?
“ What not expect the father for the wife ?
“ To give his innate virtue full support,
“ Be mine the care ; he will not shame the court.
“ Here shall he bear the rank his merit gains,
“ Example to our nobles and our swains !”
Peganus, by their mutual virtues won,
Strait ask'd the blooming daughter for his son.

With

With which Gualtherus gracefully comply'd ;
" If so my son might call your daughter bride."
Ask you, how led the younger race their lives ?
Just as they should. Mere husbands and mere wives !
At rule the women neither aim'd, nor broke
Their vow ; with equal neck they bore the yoke.
The men accus'd them not of crimes unknown ;
But, pard'ning lighter faults, excus'd their own.

Thus found that mournful day a blissful end ;
In mirth and revel the glad night they spend.
Short seem'd the hours of converse and delight ;
Ev'n day impertinently rose on night.
The coldest maids and wildest youths confess'd,
So to be join'd was doubly to be blest !
With license all their various censure pass'd,
Some the first marriage prais'd, and some the last.
The pair of last or first no diff'rence make ;
Still one in soul, though funder'd by mistake.
Each wrapt in each, the concord they improve ;
Their life was one long day of harmony and love.

I mean not by this tale, I must declare,
What husbands should exact, or wives should bear.
That sense would much my gen'rous master wrong ;
For thus Petrarch has moraliz'd the song.

Ye fair ! without offence let truth be told ;
 This age is not so strong as was the old.
 The proof you could not suffer, if you would ;
 Too much for human flesh, and human blood.

Yet patience is a good, of use in life,
 To youth, or maid ; to husband, or to wife ;
 A virtue to no sex or age confin'd :
 Our author would extend it to mankind.

For if such trials bore, such hazards ran,
 (Mere force of love) a woman for a man ;
 Shall I presume to question his decree,
 By whom I am ; in whom I hope to be ?

Vice luring in the way of virtue lies.
 God suffers this ; but tempts not, though he tries.
 Go wrong or right, 'tis your own action still ;
 He leaves you to your choice of good or ill.

Then choose the good ; the ill submissly bear ;
 The man of virtue is above despair.
 Safe on this maxim with Griselda rest ;
 That all that fortunes, fortunes for the best.

Chaucer who close attended, from the ground
 His musing eyes up-rais'd, and look'd around.
 " Spare me (he cry'd) if not our Host oppose,
 " One word of epilogue before you close.

“ So rare a coin are true Griseldas grown,
“ Scarce two are found in any country town.
“ And bold the man, not wise, that dares engage
“ To warrant one in London in an age.
“ For put the current cash to full assay,
“ The gold is mix'd with brass ; a bad alloy !
“ And should it stand the touch, or cheat the eye,
“ Trust me, at last, 'twill rather break than ply.
“ Hence, let our pray'rs the wife of Bath befriend,
“ Whose life and sect ye pow'rs of love defend.
“ Still may her tongue the sov'reign rule maintain ;
“ And never may her hand relax the rein.
“ Free may she live in undisturb'd delight,
“ All day in revel, and in bliss all night.
“ Nor will the modest scholar think me bold ;
“ (Who with much decency much truth has told)
“ Or will with me, as with mine Host dispense ;
“ (For no light humour takes from solid sense)
“ If this advice I add, to poise the scale :
“ A merry moral suits a serious tale.
“ Dead is Griselda ; wifely patience dead ;
“ Both bury'd in one tomb ; both laid in lead.
“ For which, ye husbands, lend attentive ear ;
“ Hear me, for it concerns you much to hear.

“ Let

" Let none, I warn you, none, on pain of life,
 " In search of a Griselda, tempt his wife.
 " If half so far her patience you assail ;
 " You try her to your loss ; for she will fail.
 " And you, ye wives of spirit, above wrongs,
 " Let no such mean example nail your tongues.
 " Let never moral poet of your age
 " Fill with your duty one romantic page.
 " Be pleasure your pursuit ; be pow'r your aim :
 " Make nothing of your virtue or your fame.
 " Of truth and honour, laugh at all he writes ;
 " Vain talk for children ! nurs'ry cant of sprites !
 " Thus taught, no merit in compliance place ;
 " Meanness of soul think modesty of face.
 " It matters not, how tender, when alone,
 " The partner of thy life. It should be known ;
 " Known to thy friends : nor yet should that suffice.
 " To strangers be it known, might I advise.
 " And now imprint this lesson on your mind,
 " The benefit by practice you will find.
 " Trust not the marriage venture to his hand ;
 " Freight he the frigate, thou the sail command !
 " Why to his blustry oath such def'rence paid ?
 " The husband why thus dreaded and obey'd ?

" Arm'd

“ Arm'd though he stood, complete in plated mail ;
“ The arrows of thy quiver shall not fail.
“ Thy crabbed eloquence supplies a dart,
“ That, ent'ring at his ear, shall pierce his heart.
“ If you have beauty, strait alarm his love :
“ Be ever on the dress, and on the rove.
“ At home would he remain ? Abroad then roam !
“ Then would he roam abroad ? Remain at home !
“ Make it your rule, to see and to be seen ;
“ Abroad in humour ; and at home in spleen !
“ Touch but his jealousy, you must prevail :
“ Yes, you will make him couch like any quail.
“ The pow'r of form if nature has deny'd ;
“ Though not his love, you may alarm his pride.
“ Be open of your house, to sup or dine,
“ Bring company ; for all he has is thine.
“ To fiddlers, priests, play'rs, poets, give or lend :
“ Money shall win thee many an humble friend.
“ Thy man may fume and fret, and rave, and rail :
“ But touch his honour, and you low'r his fail.
“ For you, the masculine, to labour bred,
“ When menaces his hand, correct his head.
“ If nature gives the sinew and the frame,
“ Same as the pow'r, why not the use the same ?
“ Whene'er

" Whene'er your wish is wilfully withstood,
 " Exert your talent ; it will do him good.
 " Stick to your point ! Again withstood, withstand !
 " There is no logic like a heavy hand.
 " But for the delicate, the weak in fight,
 " The rich, the great, the tender, the polite ;
 " Be furious as a tiger ; or if that
 " You cannot compass, vixen as a cat !
 " By tongue reclaim this rebel to your will,
 " Loud as the clapper of a drudging mill !
 " Fast as the flier of a well-order'd jack,
 " From morn to night keep one continu'd clack !
 " And went he twice as loud, and twice as fast,
 " Speak what he will, like echo speak the last."

PROLOGUE

TO THE

MERCHANT'S TALE.

THAT you need never fear, replied our Host,
For wives in scolding ever rule the roast :
But, Merchant, let me mind you of your tale ;
My bill is drawn at sight ; you must not fail.

The Merchant, then—Your mandate I obey ;
Sir Host ! I hold you sov'reign for the day.
Gracious receive what humbly is address'd,
So pleasing one, I hope to please the rest.

Yet grant me first to wail, if not atone,
A greater ill ; a folly of my own :
For store of rancour, malice, spleen, and spite,
Have I, from ev'ry morn to ev'ry night !

No peace at table, and no rest in bed !
The case of most so hardy as to wed ;
For mine, I trow, is not a single case :
Ev'n here are more, that wear the marry'd face.

Yet

Yet am I one of those, supremely curst,
Plagu'd with a wife, of wicked wives the worst !
To blame her, here or there, would be to wrong
The compass of her temper, or her tongue !
Nor this, nor that, her special vice I call ;
Her first, or last ; she is a shrew at all !

Long is the distance, and the diff'rence wide,
*Twixt humble Grizild and my haughty bride !
Unfetter'd once, so may I trade and thrive,
As nought should teach my heart again to wive.
Cag'd, soon as caught in the connubial snare,
We dance one round of slav'ry and of care.
Who takes a wife, will find it to his cost ;
The freedom and the ease of life is lost.
Try he that will the matrimonial state,
This will he own a truth, or soon, or late.
By holy Thomas, the good saint of Inde,
Deceitful is the sex ; a flipp'ry kind.
This of the greater part I mean to say ;
For one and all, would be the devil to pay !

Here, should you ask me, my right honest Host,
How long since I was shipwreck'd on the coast ?

276 PROLOGUE TO THE MERCHANT'S TALE.

With this my second choice what time has past ?
(Peace to my first of wives, for this my last !)
How long ? you scarce will take it on my word ;
Two months are past, we enter on a third.
For slightly here to touch, not fully paint,
This marry'd fiend of an unmarry'd saint,
Who caught me with the farce of love she play'd,
But singly priz'd me for my stock in trade ;
This scold of mine keeps one eternal round ;
Sure never youth to age in wedlock bound
In course of years endur'd such noise and strife !
Her lesson of an hour would mar his life !

We will not doubt your word (our Host reply'd) ;
Yet some their talents in a napkin hide.
Now you that are a master of the art,
Conceal not all your knowledge, but impart.

Sir (says the Merchant), 'tis the thing I mean ;
The thing you seek ; a matrimonial scene !
Not that my proper farce I will disclose ;
But laugh, as others laugh, at others' woes.
None but the fool his own concern reveals ;
For who feels pain, for what his neighbour feels ?

JANUARY

JANUARY AND MAY:

OR, THE

MERCHANT'S TALE.

HERE liv'd in Lombardy, as authors write,
 In days of old, a wise and worthy knight ;
 Of gentle manners, as of gen'rous race,
 Bless'd with much sence, more riches, and some grace.
 Yet, led astray by Venus' soft delights,
 He scarce could rule some idle appetites :
 For long ago, let priests say what they could,
 Weak, sinful laymen were but flesh and blood.

But in due time, when sixty years were o'er,
 He vow'd to lead this vicious life no more.
 Whether pure holines inspir'd his mind,
 Or dotage turn'd his brain, is hard to find ;
 But his high courage prick'd him forth to wed,
 And try the pleasures of a lawful bed.
 This was his nightly dream, his daily care,
 And to the heav'nly pow'rs his constant pray'r,

T 3

Once,

Once, ere he dy'd, to taste the blissful life
Of a kind husband and a loving wife.

These thoughts he fortify'd with reasons still,
(For none want reasons to confirm their will.)
Grave authors say, and witty poets sing,
That honest wedlock is a glorious thing :
But depth of judgment most in him appears,
Who wisely weds in his maturer years.
Then let him choose a damsel, young and fair,
To bless his age, and bring a worthy heir ;
To sooth his cares, and, free from noise and strife,
Conduct him gently to the verge of life.
Let sinful bachelors their woes deplore ;
Full well they merit all they feel, and more :
Unaw'd by precepts, human or divine,
Like birds and beasts promiscuously they join :
Nor know to make the present blessing last,
To hope the future, or esteem the past ;
But vainly boast the joys they never try'd,
And find divulg'd the secrets they would hide.
The marry'd man may bear his yoke with ease,
Secure at once himself and heav'n to please ;
And pass his inoffensive hours away
In bliss all night, and innocence all day.

Thought

Though fortune change, his constant spouse remains,
Augments his joys, or mitigates his pains.

But what so pure, which envious tongues will
spare ?

Some wicked wits have libell'd all the fair.
With matchless impudence they style a wife,
The dear-bought curse and lawful plague of life !
A bosom-serpent, a domestic evil !
A night-invasion, and a mid-day devil !
Let not the wife these fland'rous words regard,
But curse the bones of ev'ry lying bard.

All other goods by fortune's hand are giv'n;
A wife is the peculiar gift of heav'n:
Vain fortune's favours, never at a stay,
Like empty shadows, pass, and glide away.
One solid comfort our eternal wife
Abundantly supplies us all our life :
This blessing lasts (if those who try say true)
As long as heart can wish—and longer too.

Our grandsire Adam, ere of Eve posseß'd,
Alone, and ev'n in paradise unbleß'd,
With mournful looks the blissful scenes survey'd,
And wander'd in the solitary shade :
The Maker saw, took pity, and bestow'd
Woman, the last, the best reserve of God.

T 4

A wife !

A wife ! ah, gentle deities, can he
That has a wife e'er feel adversity ?
Would men but follow what the sex advise,
All things would prosper, all the world grow wise.
'Twas by Rebecca's aid that Jacob won
His father's blessing from an elder son :
Abusive Nabal ow'd his forfeit life
To the wife conduct of a prudent wife :
Heroic Judith, as old Hebrews show,
Preserv'd the Jews, and flew th' Assyrian foe :
At Hester's suit the persecuting sword
Was sheath'd, and Israel liv'd to bless the Lord.

These weighty motives January the sage
Maturely ponder'd in his riper age ;
And, charm'd with virtuous joys, and sober life,
Would try that christian comfort call'd a wife.
His friends were summon'd on a point so nice,
To pass their judgment, and to give advice ;
But fix'd before and well resolv'd was he :
(As men that ask advice are wont to be.)

“ My friends, he cry'd ” (and cast a mournful look
Around the room, and sigh'd before he spoke) :
“ Beneath the weight of threescore years I bend,
“ And, worn with cares, am hast'ning to my end.

“ How

“ How I have liv'd, alas ! you know too well,
“ In worldly follies which I blush to tell :
“ But gracious heav'n has op'd my eyes at last ;
“ With due regret I view my vices past ;
“ And, as the precept of the church decrees,
“ Will take a wife, and live in holy ease.
“ But since by counsel all things should be done,
“ And many heads are wiser still than one ;
“ Choose you for me, who best shall be content,
“ When my desire's approv'd by your consent.

“ One caution yet is needful to be told,
“ To guide your choice : this wife must not be old.
“ There goes a saying, and 'twas shrewdly said,
“ Old fish at table, but young flesh in bed.
“ My soul abhors the tasteless, dry embrace
“ Of a stale virgin with a winter-face :
“ In that cold season love but treats his guest
“ With bean-straw and tough forage at the best.
“ No crafty widows shall approach my bed ;
“ Those are too wise for bachelors to wed :
“ As subtile clerks by many schools are made,
“ Twice marry'd dames are mistresses o'th' trade:
“ But young and tender virgins, rul'd with ease,
“ We form like wax, and mould them as we please.

“ Conceive

“Conceive me, sirs, nor take my sense amiss;
“ ’Tis what concerns my soul’s eternal bliss ;
“ Since, if I found no pleasure in my spouse,
“ As flesh is frail, and who (God help me) knows ?
“ Then should I live in lewd adultery,
“ And sink downright to Satan when I die.
“ Or were I curs’d with an unfruitful bed,
“ The righteous end were lost, for which I wed ;
“ To raise up seed to bless the pow’rs above,
“ And not for pleasure only, or for love.
“ Think not I doat ; ’tis time to take a wife,
“ When vig’rous blood forbids a chaster life :
“ Those that are blest’d with store of grace divine,
“ May live like saints, by heav’n’s consent and
mine.
“ And since I speak of wedlock, let me say,
“ (As, thank my stars, in modest truth I may)
“ My limbs are active ; still I’m sound at heart,
“ And a new vigour springs in ev’ry part.
“ Think not my virtue lost, though time has fled
“ These rev’rend honours on my hoary head :
“ Thus trees are crown’d with blossoms white as snow,
“ The vital sap then rising from below :

“ Old

“ Old as I am, my lusty limbs appear
“ Like winter-greens, that flourish all the year.
“ Now, sirs, you know to what I stand inclin'd ;
“ Let ev'ry friend with freedom speak his mind.”

He said ; the rest in diff'rent parts divide,
The knotty point was urg'd on either side :
Marriage, the theme on which they all declaim'd,
Some prais'd with wit, and some with reason blam'd.
Till, what with proofs, objections, and replies,
Each wondrous positive, and wondrous wise,
There fell between his brothers a debate ;
Placebo this was call'd, and Justin that.

First to the knight Placebo thus begun
(Mild were his looks, and pleasing was his tone :)
‘ Such prudence, sir, in all your words appears,
‘ As plainly proves, experience dwells with years :
‘ Yet you pursue sage Solomon's advice,
‘ To work by counsel when affairs are nice :
‘ But, with the wise man's leave, I must protest,
‘ (So may my soul arrive at ease and rest, }
‘ As still I hold your own advice the best.) }
‘ Sir, I have liv'd a courtier all my days,
‘ And study'd men, their manners, and their ways ;
‘ And

' And have observ'd this useful maxim still,
 ' To let my betters always have their will.
 ' Nay, if my lord affirm'd that black was white,
 ' My word was this, *your honour's in the right*.
 ' Th' assuming wit, who deems himself so wise,
 ' As his mistaken patron to advise,
 ' Let him not dare to vent his dang'rous thought ;
 ' A noble fool was never in a fault.
 ' This, sir, affects not you, whose ev'ry word
 ' Is weigh'd with judgment, and befits a lord :
 ' Your will is mine ; and is (I will maintain)
 ' Pleasing to God, and should be so to man ;
 ' At leaft your courage all the world must praise,
 ' Who dare to wed in your declining days.
 ' Indulge the vigour of your mounting blood,
 ' And let grey fools be indolently good ;
 ' Who, past all pleasure, damn the joys of sense
 ' With rev'rend dulness and grave impotence.'

Justin, who silent fate, and heard the man,
 Thus with a philosophic frown began :

' A Heathen author of the first degree,
 ' (Who, though not faith, had sense as well as we)
 ' Bids us be certain our concerns to trust
 ' To those of gen'rous principles and just.

• The

‘ The venture's greater, I'll presume to say,
‘ To give your person, than your goods away :
‘ And therefore, sir, as you regard your rest,
‘ First learn your lady's qualities at least :
‘ Whether she's chaste or rampant, proud or civil ;
‘ Meek as a saint, or haughty as the devil ;
‘ Whether an easy, fond, familiar fool,
‘ Or such a wit as no man e'er can rule.
‘ 'Tis true, perfection none must hope to find
‘ In all this world, much less in womankind :
‘ But if her virtues prove the larger share,
‘ Bless the kind fates, and think your fortune rare.
‘ Ah, gentle sir, take warning of a friend,
‘ Who knows too well the state you thus command ;
‘ And, spite of all his praises, must declare,
‘ All he can find is bondage, cost, and care.
‘ Heav'n knows, I shed full many a private tear,
‘ And sigh in silence, lest the world should hear :
‘ While all my friends applaud my blissful life,
‘ And swear no mortal's happier in a wife ;
‘ Demure and chaste as any Vestal nun,
‘ The meekest creature that beholds the sun !
‘ But, by th' immortal pow'rs, I feel the pain,
‘ And he that smarts has reason to complain.

‘ Do

• Do what you list, for me ; you must be sage,
 • And cautious sure ; for wisdom is in age :
 • But at these years to venture on the fair—
 • (By him, who made the ocean, earth, and air)
 • To please a wife, when her occasions call—
 • Would busy the most vig'rous of us all.
 • And trust me, sir, the chaffest you can choose
 • Will ask observance, and exact her dues.
 • If what I speak my noble lord offend,
 • My tedious sermon here is at an end.
 “ ’Tis well, ’tis wondrous well, the knight replies,
 “ Most worthy kinsman, faith, you’re mighty wife !
 “ We, sirs, are fools, and must resign the cause
 “ To heath’nish authors, proverbs, and old saws.”
 (He spoke with scorn, and turn’d another way :—)
 “ What does my friend, my dear Placebo say ?”
 “ I say (quoth he) by heav’n, the man’s to blame,
 • To slander wives, and wedlock’s holy name.’
 At this, the council rose without delay ;
 Each, in his own opinion, went his way ;
 With full consent, that, all disputes appeas’d,
 The knight should marry when and where he pleas’d.
 Who now but January exults with joy ?
 The charms of wedlock all his soul employ :

Each

Each nymph by turns his wav'ring mind possess'd,
And reign'd the short-liv'd tyrant of his breast ;
While fancy pictur'd ev'ry lively part,
And each bright image wander'd o'er his heart.
Thus, in some public forum fix'd on high,
A mirror shows the figures moving by ;
Still one by one, in swift succession, pass
The gliding shadows o'er the polish'd glass.
This lady's charms the nicest could not blame ;
But vile suspicions had aspers'd her fame :
That was with sense, but not with virtue, blest ;
And one had grace, that wanted all the rest.
Thus doubting long what nymph he should obey,
He fix'd at last upon the youthful May.
Her faults he knew not, love is always blind,
But ev'ry charm revolv'd within his mind :
Her tender age, her form divinely fair !
Her easy motion, her attractive air !
Her sweet behaviour, her enchanting face !
Her moving softness, and majestic grace !

Much in his prudence did our knight rejoice,
And thought no mortal could dispute this choice :
Once more in haste he summon'd ev'ry friend,
And told them all, their pains were at an end :

“ Heav'n,

“ Heav’n, that (said he) inspir’d me first to wed,

“ Provides a confort worthy of my bed :

“ Let none oppose th’ election, since on this

“ Depends my quiet, and my future blis.

“ A dame there is, the darling of my eyes,

“ Young, beauteous, artleſs, innocent, and wife ;

“ Chaste, though not rich, and, though not nobly born,

“ Of honest parents, and may serve my turn.

“ Her will I wed, if gracious heav’n so please,

“ To paſs my age in sanctity and eaſe :

“ And thank the pow’rs, I may poſſeſſ alone

“ The lovely prize, and ſhare my blis with none !

“ If you, my friends, this virgin can procure,

“ My joys are full, my happieneſs is ſure.

“ One only doubt remains : full oft I’ve heard,

“ By caſuifts grave, and deep divines averr’d ;

“ That ’tis too much for human race to know

“ The blis of heav’n above and earth below.

“ Now ſhould the nuptial pleaſures prove ſo great,

“ To match the bleſſings of the future ſtate,

“ Thoſe endleſs joys were ill exchang’d for theſe ;

“ Then clear this doubt, and ſet my mind at eaſe.”

This Justin heard ; nor could his ſpleen controul,

Touch’d to the quick, and tickled at the ſoul.

“ Sir

‘ Sir knight (he cry'd) if this be all your dread,
‘ Heav'n put it past your doubt, whene'er you wed ;
‘ And to my fervent pray'rs so far consent,
‘ That, ere the rites are o'er, you may repent !
‘ Good heav'n, no doubt, the nuptial state approves,
‘ Since it chastises still what best it loves :
‘ Then be not, sir, abandon'd to despair ;
‘ Seek, and perhaps you'll find, among the fair,
‘ One that may do your business to a hair : }
‘ Not ev'n in wish your happiness delay,
‘ But prove the scourge to lash you on your way :
‘ Then to the skies your mounting soul shall go,
‘ Swift as an arrow soaring from the bow.
‘ Provided still you moderate your joy,
‘ Nor in your pleasures all your might employ :
‘ Let reason's rule your strong desires abate,
‘ Nor please too lavishly your gentle mate.
‘ Old wives there are, of judgment most acute,
‘ Who solve these questions beyond all dispute ;
‘ Consult with those, and be of better cheer ;
‘ Marry, do penance, and dismiss your fear.’

So said, they rose, nor more the work delay'd ;
The match was offer'd, the proposals made.

The parents, you may think, would soon comply ;
The old have int'rest ever in their eye.
Nor was it hard to move the lady's mind :
When fortune favours, still the fair are kind.
I pass each previous settlement and deed,
Too long for me to write, or you to read :
Nor will with quaint impertinence display
The pomp, the pageantry, the proud array.
The time approach'd, to church the parties went,
At once with carnal and devout intent :
Forth came the priest, and bade th' obedient wife,
Like Sarah, or Rebecca, lead her life :
Then pray'd the pow'r in the fruitful bed to bless,
And made all sure enough with holiness.

And now the palace gates are open'd wide ;
The guests appear in order, side by side,
And plac'd in state the bridegroom and the bride. }
The breathing flute's soft notes are heard around,
And the shrill trumpets mix their silver sound ;
The vaulted roofs with echoing music ring,
These touch the vocal stops, and those the trembling
string.
Not thus Amphion tun'd the warbling lyre,
Nor Joab the sounding clarion could inspire ;

Nor

Nor fierce Theodamas, whose sprightly strain
Could swell the soul to rage, and fire the martial train.

Bacchus himself, the nuptial feast to grace,
(So poets sing) was present on the place :
And lovely Venus, goddess of delight,
Shook high her flaming torch in open sight,
And danc'd around, and smil'd on ev'ry knight : }
Pleas'd her best servant could his courage try,
No less in wedlock than in liberty.

Full many an age old Hymen had not spy'd
So kind a bridegroom, or so bright a bride.
Ye bards ! renown'd among the tuneful throng
For gentle lays, and joyous nuptial song,
Think not your softest numbers can display
The matchless glories of this blissful day ;
The joys are such, as far transcend your rage,
When tender youth has wedded stooping age.

The beauteous dame fate smiling at the board,
And darted am'rous glances at her lord.
Not Hester's self, whose charms the Hebrews sing,
E'er look'd so lovely on her Persian king :
Bright as the rising sun, in summer's day,
And fresh and blooming as the month of May !

The joyful knight survey'd her by his side,
Nor envy'd Paris with the Spartan bride :
Still, as his mind revolv'd with vast delight
Th' entrancing raptures of th' approaching night,
Restless he sat, invoking ev'ry pow'r
To speed his bliss, and haste the happy hour.
Meantime the vig'rous dancers beat the ground,
And songs were sung, and flowing bowls went round ;
With od'rous spices they perfum'd the place,
And mirth and pleasure shone in ev'ry face.

Damian alone, of all the menial train,
Sad in the midst of triumphs, sigh'd for pain ;
Damian alone, the knight's obsequious squire,
Consum'd at heart, and fed a secret fire.
His lovely mistress all his soul possess'd ;
He look'd, he languish'd, and could take no rest :
His task perform'd, he sadly went his way,
Fell on his bed, and loath'd the light of day :
There let him lie, till his relenting dame
Weep in her turn, and waste in equal flame.

The weary sun, as learned poets write,
Forsook th' horizon, and roll'd down the light ;
While glitt'ring stars his absent beams supply,
And night's dark mantle overspread the sky.

Then

Then rose the guests ; and, as the time requir'd,
Each paid his thanks, and decently retir'd.

The foe once gone, our knight prepar'd t' undres,
So keen he was, and eager to posses :
But first thought fit th' assistance to receive,
Which grave physicians scruple not to give :
Satyron near, with hot Eringos stood,
Cantharides, to fire the lazy blood ;
Whose use old bards describe in luscious rhymes,
And critics learn'd explain to modern times.

By this the sheets were spread, the bride undres'd,
The room was sprinkled, and the bed was bles'd.
What next ensu'd, beseems not me to say ;
'Tis fung, he labour'd till the dawning day ;
Then briskly sprung from bed, with heart so light,
As all were nothing he had done by night ; }
And fipp'd his cordial as he sat upright : }
He kiss'd his balmy spouse with wanton play,
And feebly fung a lusty roundelay :
Then on the couch his weary limbs he cast ;
For ev'ry labour must have rest at last.

But anxious cares the penfive squire oppress'd,
Sleep fled his eyes, and peace forsook his breast :

The raging flames, that in his bosom dwell,
He wanted art to hide, and means to tell.
Yet hoping time th' occasion might betray,
Compos'd a sonnet to the lovely May ;
Which writ, and folded with the nicest art,
He wrapp'd in silk, and laid upon his heart.

When now the fourth revolving day was run,
('Twas June, and Cancer had receiv'd the sun)
Forth from her chamber came the beauteous bride ;
The good old knight mov'd slowly by her side.
High masts was sung ; they feasted in the hall ;
The servants round stood ready at their call.
The squire alone was absent from the board,
And much his sicknes griev'd his worthy lord,
Who pray'd his spouse, attended by her train,
To visit Damian, and divert his pain.
Th' obliging dames obey'd with one consent ;
They left the hall, and to his lodging went.
The female tribe surround him as he lay,
And close beside him sat the gentle May :
Where, as she try'd his pulse, he softly drew
A speaking sigh, and cast a mournful view ;
Then gave his bill, and brib'd the pow'rs divine
With secret vows, to favour his design.

Who

Who studies now, but discontented May ?
On her soft couch uneasily she lay :
The lumpish husband snor'd away the night,
Till coughs awak'd him near the mörning light.
What then he did, I not presume to tell,
Nor if she thought herself in heav'n or hell :
Honest and dull in nuptial bed they lay,
Till the bell toll'd, and all arose to pray.

Were it by forceful destiny decreed,
Or did from chance or nature's pow'r proceed ;
Or that some star, with aspect kind to love,
Shed its sele&test influence from above ;
Whatever was the cause, the tender dame
Felt the first motions of an infant flame ;
Receiv'd th' impressions of the love-sick squire,
And wasted in the soft infectious fire.

Ye fair, draw near, let May's example move
Your gentle minds to pity those who love !
Had some fierce tyrant in her stead been found,
The poor adorer sure had hang'd or drown'd.
But she, your sex's mirror, free from pride,
Was much too meek to prove a homicide.

But, to my tale : Some sages have defin'd
Pleasure the sov'reign bliss of human-kind :

Our knight (who study'd much, we may suppose)
Deriv'd his high philosophy from those ;
For, like a prince, he bore the vast expence
Of lavish pomp and proud magnificence :
His house was stately, his retinue gay,
Large was his train, and gorgeous his array.
His spacious garden, made to yield to none,
Was compass'd round with walls of solid stone :
Priapus could not half describe the grace
(Though god of gardens) of this charming place :
A place to tire the rambling wits of France
In long descriptions, and exceed romance ;
Enough to shame the gentlest bard that sings
Of painted meadows, and of purling springs.

Full in the center of the flow'ry ground
A crystal fountain spread its streams around,
The fruitful banks with verdant laurels crown'd : }
About this spring (if ancient fame says true)
The dapper elves their moonlight sports pursue ;
Their pigmy king, and little fairy queen,
In circling dances gambol'd on the green,
While tuneful sprites a merry concert made,
And airy music warbled through the shade.

Hither

Hither the noble knight would oft repair,
(His scene of pleasure and peculiar care)
For this he held it dear, and always bore
The silver key that lock'd the garden door.
To this sweet place, in summer's sultry heat,
He us'd from noise and bus'neis to retreat ;
And here in dalliance spend the live-long day,
Solus cum sola, with his sprightly May.
For, whate'er work was undischarg'd abed,
The duteous knight in this fair garden sped.

But ah ! what mortal lives of bliss secure ?
How short a space our worldly joys endure !
O fortune, fair, like all thy treach'rous kind,
But faithless still, and wav'ring as the wind !
O painted monster ! form'd mankind to cheat
With pleasing poison, and with soft deceit !
This rich, this am'rous, venerable knight,
Amidst his ease, his solace, and delight,
Struck blind by thee, resigns his days to grief,
And calls on death, the wretch's last relief.

The rage of jealousy then feiz'd his mind :
For much he fear'd the faith of womankind.
His wife, not suffer'd from his side to stray,
Was captive kept ; he watch'd her night and day, }
Abridg'd her pleasures, and confin'd her sway. }
Full

Full oft in tears did hapless May complain,
And sigh'd full oft ; but sigh'd and wept in vain :
She look'd on Damian with a lover's eye :
For oh, 'twas fix'd ; she must possess, or die !
Nor less impatience vex'd her am'rous squire,
Wild with delay, and burning with desire.
Watch'd as she was, yet could he not refrain
By secret writing to disclose his pain :
The dame by signs reveal'd her kind intent,
Till both were conscious what each other meant.

Ah, gentle knight ! what would thy eyes avail,
Though they could see as far as ships can sail ?
'Tis better sure, when blind, deceiv'd to be,
Than be deluded when a man can see.

Argus himself, so cautious and so wise,
Was over-watch'd, for all his hundred eyes :
So many an honest husband may, 'tis known,
Who, wisely, never thinks the case his own.

The dame at last, by diligence and care,
Procur'd the key her knight was wont to bear ;
She took the wards in wax before the fire,
And gave th' impression to the trusty squire.
By means of this some wonder shall appear,
Which in due place and season you may hear.

Well

Well sung sweet Ovid in the days of yore,
What flight is that which love will not explore?
And Pyramus and Thisbe plainly shew,
The feats true lovers, when they list, can do :
Though watch'd and captive, yet, in spite of all,
They found the art of kissing through a wall.

But now no longer from our tale to stray,
It happ'd that once, upon a summer's day,
Our rev'rend knight was urg'd to am'rous play:
He rais'd his spouse ere matin-bell was rung,
And thus his morning-canticle he sung :

“ Awake, my love, disclose thy radiant eyes;
“ Arise, my wife, my beauteous lady, rise !
“ Hear how the doves with pensive notes complain,
“ And in soft murmurs tell the trees their pain :
“ The winter's past ; the clouds and tempests fly ;
“ The sun adorns the fields, and brightens all the sky.
“ Fair without spot, whose ev'ry charming part
“ My bosom wounds, and captivates my heart :
“ Come, and in mutual pleasures let's engage,
“ Joy of my life, and comfort of my age.”

This heard, to Damian strait a sign she made,
To haste before ; the gentle squire obey'd :

Secret,

Secret and undescry'd, he took his way,
And ambush'd close behind an arbour lay.

It was not long ere January came,
And hand in hand with him his lovely dame :
Blind as he was, not doubting all was sure,
He turn'd the key, and made the gate secure.

“ Here let us walk (he said) observ'd by none,
“ Conscious of pleasures to the world unknown :
“ So may my soul have joy, as thou, my wife,
“ Art far the dearest solace of my life ;
“ And rather would I choose, by heav'n above,
“ To die this instant, than to lose thy love.
“ Reflect what truth was in my paffion shwon,
“ When unendow'd I took thee for my own,
“ And fought no treasure but thy heart alone.
“ Old as I am, and now depriv'd of sight,
“ While thou art faithful to thy own true knight,
“ Nor age, nor blindness rob me of delight.
“ Each other loss with patience I can bear,
“ The loss of thee is what I only fear.
“ Consider then, my lady, and my wife,
“ The solid comforts of a virtuous life.
“ As first the love of Christ himself you gain ;
“ Next, your own honour undefil'd maintain ;

“ And

“ And lastly, that which sure your mind must move,
“ My whole estate shall gratify your love :
“ Make your own terms, and ere to-morrow's sun
“ Displays his light, by heav'n it shall be done.
“ I seal the contract with an holy kiss,
“ And will perform, by this—my dear—and this—
“ Have comfort, spouse, nor think thy lord unkind ;
“ 'Tis love, not jealousy, that fires my mind.
“ For when thy charms my sober thoughts engage,
“ And join'd to them my own unequal age ;
“ From thy dear side I have no pow'r to part,
“ Such secret transports warm my melting heart.
“ For who, that once posses'd those heav'nly charms,
“ Could live one moment absent from thy arms ?”

He ceas'd; and May with modest grace reply'd,
(Weak was her voice, as while she spoke she cry'd) :

‘ Heav'n knows (with that a tender sigh she drew)
‘ I have a soul to save as well as you ;
‘ And, what no less you to my charge command,
‘ My dearest honour will to death defend.
‘ To you in holy church I gave my hand,
‘ And join'd my heart in wedlock's sacred band :
‘ Yet after this, if you distrust my care,
‘ Then hear, my lord, and witness what I swear :

‘ First,

‘ First, may the yawning earth her bosom rend,
‘ And let me hence to hell alive descend;
‘ Or die the death I dread no less than hell,
‘ Sow’d in a fack, and plung’d into a well ;
‘ Ere I my fame by one lewd act disgrace,
‘ Or once renounce the honour of my race.
‘ For know, sir knight, of gentle blood I came ;
‘ I loath a whore, and startle at the name.
‘ But jealous men on their own crimes reflect,
‘ And learn from thence their ladies to suspect :
‘ Else, why these needless cautions, sir, to me ?
‘ These doubts and fears of female constancy ?
‘ This chime still rings in ev’ry lady’s ear,
‘ The only strain a wife must hope to hear.’

Thus while she spoke, a sidelong glance she cast,
Where Damian, kneeling, worshipp’d as she pass’d.
She saw him watch the motions of her eye,
And singled out a pear-tree planted nigh :
’Twas charg’d with fruit that made a goodly shew,
And hung with dangling pears was ev’ry bough.
Thither th’ obsequious squire address’d his pace,
And climbing in the summit took his place :
The knight and lady walk’d beneath in view,
Where let us leave them, and our tale pursue.

’Twas

'Twas now the season, when the glorious sun
His heav'nly progress through the twins had run ;
And Jove exalted his mild influence yields,
To glad the glebe, and paint the flow'ry fields.
Clear was the day, and Phœbus rising bright
Had streak'd the azure firmament with light :
He pierc'd the glitt'ring clouds with golden streams,
And warm'd the womb of earth with genial beams.

It so befel in that fair morning tide,
The fairies sported on the garden's side,
And in the midst their monarch and his bride. }
So feately tripp'd the light-foot ladies round,
The knights so nimbly o'er the greenword bound, }
That scarce they bent the flow'rs, or touch'd the }
ground. }

The dances ended, all the fairy train
For pinks and daisies search'd the flow'ry plain ;
While on a bank reclin'd, of rising green,
Thus with a frown the king bespoke his queen :

“ ‘Tis too apparent, argue what you can,
“ The treachery you women use to man :
“ A thousand authors have this truth made out,
“ And sad experience leaves no room for doubt.
“ Heav'n rest thy spirit, noble Solomon,
“ A wiser monarch never saw the sun :

“ All

“ All wealth, all honours, the supreme dégree
“ Of earthly blis, was well bestow'd on thee !
“ For sagely hast thou said of all mankind,
“ One only just and righteous hope to find.
“ But should'ft thou search the spacious world around,
“ Yet one good woman is not to be found.
“ Thus says the king who knew your wicked-
ness ;
“ The son of Sirach testifies no less.
“ So may some wild-fire on your bodies fall,
“ Or some devouring plague consume you all ;
“ As well you view the leacher in the tree,
“ And well this honourable knight you see :
“ But since he's blind and old (a helpless case !)
“ His squire shall cuckold him before your face.
“ Now, by my own dread majesty I swear,
“ And by this awful sceptre which I bear,
“ No impious wretch shall 'scape unpunish'd long,
“ That in my presence offers such a wrong.
“ I will this instant undeceive the knight,
“ And in the very act restore his sight ;
“ And set the strumpet here in open view,
“ A warning to these ladies, and to you,
“ And all the faithless sex, for ever to be true.”

{ And

‘ And will you so, (reply'd the queen) indeed ? }
‘ Now, by my mother's soul, it is decreed, }
‘ She shall not want an answer at her need. }
‘ For her, and for her daughters I'll engage,
‘ And all the sex in each succeeding age :
‘ Art shall be theirs, to varnish an offence,
‘ And fortify their crimes with confidence.
‘ Nay, were they taken in a strict embrace,
‘ Seen with both eyes, and pinion'd on the place,
‘ All they shall need is to protest and swear,
‘ Breathe a soft sigh, and drop a tender tear ;
‘ Till their wise husbands, gull'd by arts like these,
‘ Grow gentle, tractable, and tame as geese.
‘ What though this fland'rous Jew, this Solomon,
‘ Call'd women fools, and knew full many a one ?
‘ The wiser wits of later times declare,
‘ How constant, chaste, and virtuous women are :
‘ Witness the martyrs, who resign'd their breath,
‘ Serene in torments, unconcern'd in death :
‘ And witness next, what Roman authors tell,
‘ How Arria, Portia, and Lucretia fell.
‘ But since the sacred leaves to all are free,
‘ And men interpret texts, why should not we ?

- ‘ By this no more was meant than to have shewn,
- ‘ That sov’reign goodness dwells in him alone,
- ‘ Who only is, and is but only one. } }
- ‘ But grant the worst, shall women then be weigh’d
- ‘ By ev’ry word that Solomon has said ?
- ‘ What though this king (as ancient story boasts)
- ‘ Built a fair temple to the Lord of Hosts ;
- ‘ He ceas’d at last his Maker to adore,
- ‘ And did as much for idol-gods, or more.
- ‘ Beware what lavish praises you confer
- ‘ On a rank leacher and idolater ;
- ‘ Whose reign indulgent God (says holy writ)
- ‘ Did but for David’s righteous sake permit ;
- ‘ David, the monarch after Heav’n’s own mind,
- ‘ Who lov’d our sex, and honour’d all our kind.
- ‘ Well, I’m a woman, and as such must speak ;
- ‘ Silence would fwell me, and my heart would break.
- ‘ Know then, I scorn your dull authorities,
- ‘ Your idle wits, and all their learned lies.
- ‘ By heav’n, those authors are our sex’s foes,
- ‘ Whom, in our right, I must and will oppose.’
- “ Nay (quoth the king) dear madam, be not wroth ;
- “ I yield it up ; but since I gave my oath,

“ That

“ That this much-injur'd knight again should see,
“ It must be done—I am a king (said he),
“ And one whose faith has ever sacred been.”
“ And so has mine (she said)—I am a queen ;
“ Her answer she shall have, I undertake ;
“ And thus an end of all dispute I make.
“ Try when you list ; and you shall find, my lord,
“ It is not in our sex to break our word.”

We leave them here in this heroic strain,
And to the knight our story turns again ;
Who in the garden with his lovely May
Sung merrier than the cuckow or the jay :
This was his song, “ Oh, kind and constant be ;
“ Constant and kind I'll ever prove to thee.”
Thus singing as he went, at last he drew,
By easy steps, to where the pear-tree grew :
The longing dame look'd up, and spy'd her love
Full fairly perch'd among the boughs above.

She stopp'd; and sighing, ‘ Oh, good gods ! (she cry'd)
‘ What pangs, what sudden shoots distend my side !
‘ Oh, for the tempting fruit, so fresh, so green !—
‘ Help, for the love of heav'n's immortal queen !
‘ Help, dearest lord, and save at once the life
‘ Of thy poor infant, and thy longing wife !’

Sore sigh'd the knight to hear his lady's cry ;
But could not climb, and had no servant nigh :
Old as he was, and void of eye-sight too,
What could, alas ! the helpless husband do ?
‘ And must I languish then (she said) and die,
‘ Yet view the lovely fruit before my eye ?
‘ At least, kind sir, for charity's sweet sake,
‘ Vouchsafe the trunk between your arms to take ;
‘ Then from your back I might ascend the tree ;
‘ Do you but stoop, and leave the rest to me.’
“ With all my soul (he thus reply'd again),
“ I'd spend my dearest blood to ease thy pain.”
With that his back against the trunk he bent ;
She seiz'd a twig, and up the tree she went.

Now prove your patience, gentle ladies all !
Nor let on me your heavy anger fall :
’Tis truth I tell, though not in phrase refin'd ;
Though blunt my tale, yet honest is my mind.
What feats the lady in the tree might do,
I pass as gambols never known to you :
But sure it was a merrier fit, she swore,
Than in her life she ever felt before.

In that nice moment, lo ! the wond'ring knight
Look'd out, and stood restor'd to sudden sight.

Strait

Strait on the tree his eager eyes he bent,
As one whose thoughts were on his spouse intent ;
But when he saw his bosom-wife so dres'd,
His rage was such as cannot be express'd :
Not frantic mothers, when their infants die,
With louder clamours rend the vaulted sky :
He cry'd, he roar'd, he storm'd, he tore his hair ;
“ Death ! hell ! and furies ! what dost thou do there ? ”
“ What ails my lord ? (the trembling dame reply'd)
“ I thought your patience had been better try'd :
“ Is this your love, ungrateful and unkind ?
“ This my reward for having cur'd the blind ?
“ Why was I taught to make my husband see,
“ By struggling with a man upon a tree ?
“ Did I for this the pow'r of magic prove ?
“ Unhappy wife, whose crime was too much love ! ”
“ If this be struggling, by this holy light,
“ ’Tis struggling with a vengeance (quoth the knight).
“ So Heav'n preserve the fight it has restor'd,
“ As with these eyes I plainly saw thee whor'd ;
“ Whor'd by my slave—Perfidious wretch ! may hell
“ As surely seize thee, as I saw too well.”
“ Guard me, good angels ! (cry'd the gentle May)
“ Pray Heav'n, this magic work the proper way !
“ Alas,

‘ Alas, my love ! ‘tis certain, could you see,
‘ You ne’er had us’d these killing words to me :
‘ So help me, Fates, as ‘tis no perfect sight,
‘ But some faint glimm’ring of a doubtful light.’

“ What I have said (quoth he) I must maintain ;
“ For, by th’ immortal pow’rs, it seem’d too plain—”

‘ By all those pow’rs, some frenzy seiz’d your mind,

‘ (Reply’d the dame)—Are these the thanks I find ?

‘ Wretch that I am, that e’er I was so kind !’

She said ; a rising figh expres’d her woe,
The ready tears apace began to flow,
And as they fell, she wip’d from either eye
The drops (for women, when they lift, can cry).

The knight was touch’d, and in his looks appear’d
Signs of remorse, while thus his spouse he cheer’d :

“ Madam, ‘tis past, and my short anger o’er ;
“ Come down, and vex your tender heart no more :
“ Excuse me, dear, if aught amiss was said ;
“ For, on my soul, amends shall soon be made :
“ Let my repentance your forgiveness draw ;
“ By heav’n, I swore but what I thought I saw.”

“ Ah,

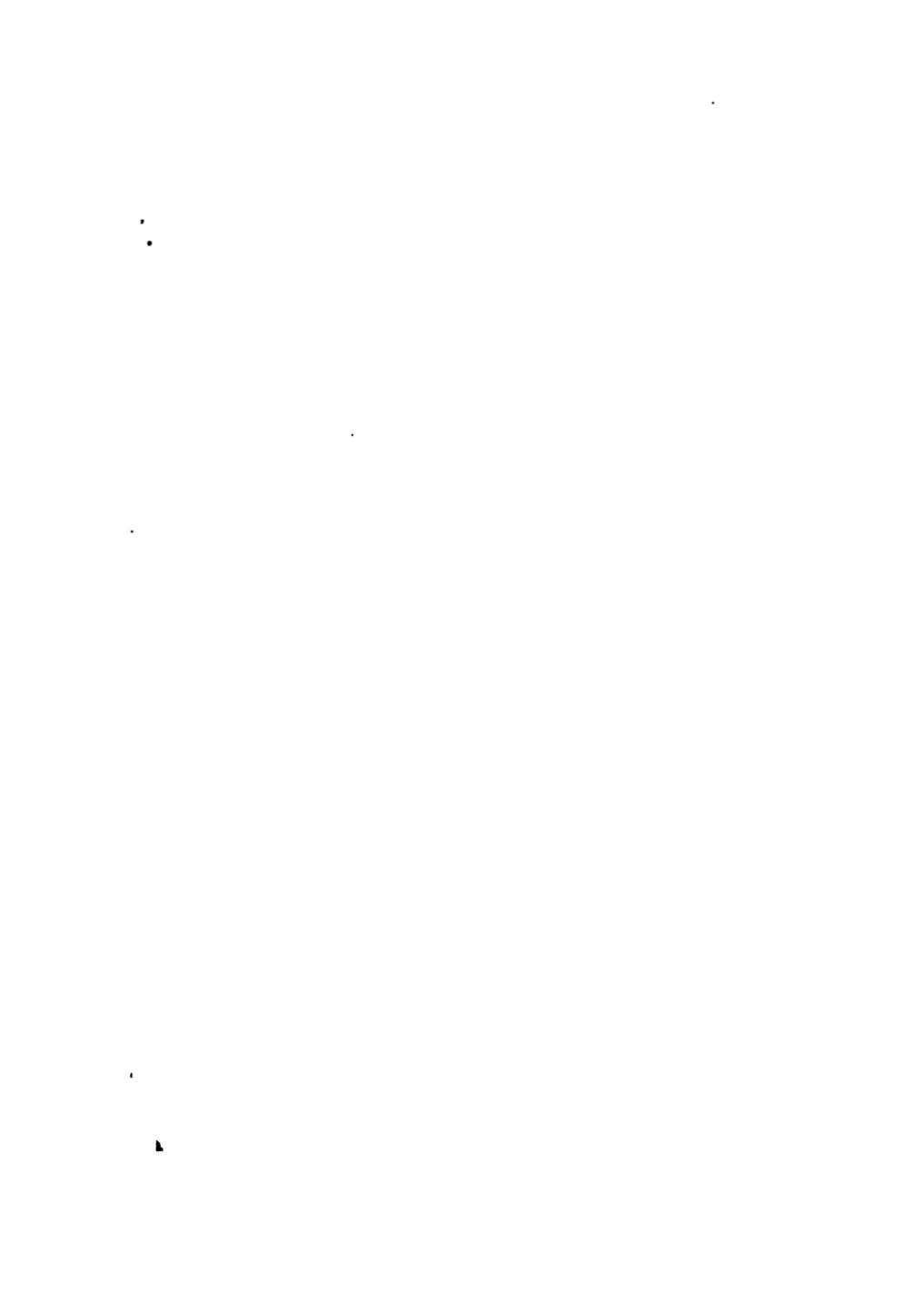
‘Ah, my lov'd lord ! 'twas much unkind (she cry'd),
 ‘ On bare suspicion thus to treat your bride.
 ‘ But till your sight's establish'd for a while,
 ‘ Imperfect objects may your sense beguile.
 ‘ Thus when from sleep we first our eyes display,
 ‘ The balls are wounded with the piercing ray,
 ‘ And dusky vapours rise, and intercept the day :
 ‘ So just recov'ring from the shades of night,
 ‘ Your swimming eyes are drunk with sudden
 light,
 ‘ Strange phantoms dance around, and skim before
 your sight.
 ‘ Then, sir, be cautious, nor too rashly deem ;
 ‘ Heav'n knows, how seldom things are what they
 seem !
 ‘ Consult your reason, and you soon shall find,
 ‘ 'Twas you were jealous, not your wife unkind :
 ‘ Jove ne'er spoke oracle more true than this,
 ‘ None judge so wrong, as those who think amiss.’

With that she leap'd into her lord's embrace,
 With well-dissembled virtue in her face.
 He'hugg'd her close, and kiss'd her o'er and o'er,
 Disturb'd with doubts and jealousies no more :
 Both pleas'd and blefs'd, renew'd their mutual vows,
 A fruitful wife, and a believing spouse.

Thus

Thus ends our tale, whose moral next to make,
Let all wise husbands hence example take ;
And pray, to crown the pleasure of their lives,
To be so well deluded by their wives.

END OF VOL. II.





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